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ABSTRACT

These materials address the use of dialogue journal writing in teaching speakers of English as a Second Language. Included is a handbook for teachers that provides background information and specific suggestions for classroom use, and an instructional packet for teachers and workshop leaders. The handbook contains chapters on: what constitutes a dialogue journal, including variations in format; the benefits of dialogue journal writing; using dialogue journals with students at various levels (beginning, intermediate, and advanced writers); specific procedures for starting journals; strategies for maintaining the student-teacher dialogue; and strategies for handling specific communication problems. An additional chapter profiles four individual student writers. Lists of resources and additional readings are appended. The instructional packet is intended for use in workshops on dialogue journal writing, and contains: an abstract for use in proposing such a workshop; simple guidelines for leading the workshop, including group activities; masters for over 30 overhead transparencies; sample student journal entries from elementary and secondary students, to which workshop participants can respond; handouts for workshop participants; and background information for the presenter. (MSE)

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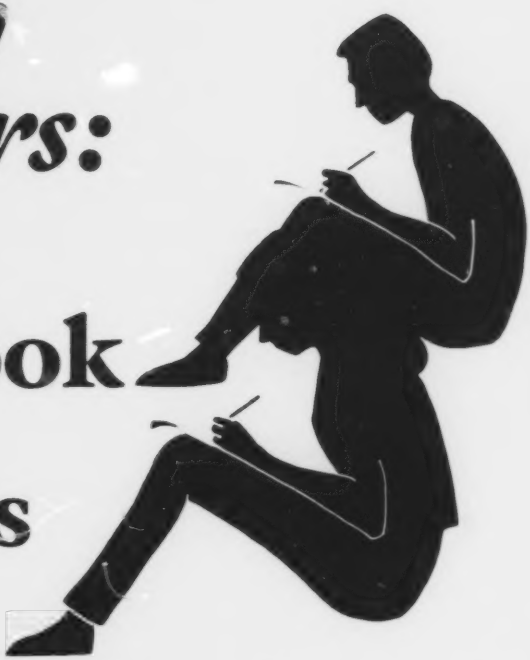
# *Dialogue Journal Writing with Nonnative English Speakers:*

# A Handbook for Teachers



Joy Kreeft Peyton
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# Dialogue Journal Writing with Nonnative English Speakers: A Handbook for Teachers

Joy Kreeft Peyton
Leslee Reed

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So many students and teachers have contributed to this handbook, by opening their classrooms and journals to us and talking with us freely about their experiences with journals, that it is impossible to mention them all. Many are mentioned specifically in the text; others are not named, or are given pseudonyms. We are grateful to all of you.

Jana Staton has been an inspiration throughout the creation of this handbook. She encouraged us to write it in the first place, helped us to formulate our thoughts and clarify them as we proceeded, and read and commented on numerous drafts.

We appreciate the ongoing support for this project and very helpful comments on earlier drafts from many fellow dialogue journal users, researchers, and interested colleagues; in particular, Donna Christian, Shelley Gutstein, Etta Johnson, Paul Jones, Carolyn Kessler, and Lila Silverman. The final version has benefited greatly from the comments of Ann Raimes, Rosanna Landis, and two anonymous TESOL reviewers.

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# PREFACE

Dialogue journals are a versatile tool that can be used in any classroom, with students of any age, from early elementary to adult. In this handbook we focus on nonnative English speaking students, at elementary through high school levels, but most of the points covered are applicable to other populations as well—adult students learning English as a second language (ESL) or dialect, students learning a foreign language, or native English-speaking students writing in English. The discussion and examples should give ample information to any teacher desiring to use dialogue journals with students of any age. We hope that dialogue journal writing proves to be as enjoyable and productive for you as it has been for us!

Joy Kreeft Peyton and Leslee Reed

# Dialogue Journals In The Classroom

*A Reflection by Leslee Reed*

Every student who starts school faces the unknown—a new teacher, a new situation, new classmates—and wonders, "How will I get along in this situation?" First day jitters are common, even for those who have attended the same school for a number of years. Imagine then, the heightened emotional impact of a new school year for students from other countries, who cannot speak the language, are not sure of the customs, and may even fear for their safety. Being laughed at by others, not being understood, or even needing to use the restroom and being too embarrassed to ask can create emotional stress for new non-English speaking students.

After the first days of school, once they have developed some assurance that the teacher, classroom, and fellow classmates are safe and that there are ways of coping, students are usually ready to talk to someone, to express their fear or confusion, and to ask for explanations about new customs, behaviors, and classroom activities. The teacher is the obvious person to turn to, but attempting to talk to the teacher can be frustrating. After working up the courage to approach the teacher, and despite careful mental rehearsals, students often feel uncertain of what to say, or find that someone else is there listening in, or that the teacher responds with a question or comment which the student doesn't understand. The result can be a renewed sense of failure, which can eventually undermine the willingness to attempt to communicate at all. Dialogue journals can ease the pain of such face-to-face encounters by providing a nonthreatening way for students to communicate.

My own experience with using dialogue journals has convinced me

that students who come to the classroom unable to speak English soon find that the journals can be a real source of comfort and satisfaction. Each day my students find messages written specifically for them. They have a sense of personal identity and a personal link with me. They can ask for help in the journal, and no one will laugh at them for asking "dumb questions." The journal is the one area in which the students in my mainstream classroom who come from other countries and are learning English can participate as equals with those who have been in this country all of their lives. Like all students, they read and write in their journal each day. Incorrect spelling and grammar do not make a difference in the journals; the message is the important thing. The students know that I "hear" them, and they respond even if they are unable to speak out orally. No one laughs at their mistakes, and incorrect usage of words is not noted or ridiculed.

When my students arrive at school each morning, they head straight for their dialogue journals. They know I have given my attention to them and to them alone through my written response. They understand what I have written to them because the words, structures, and ideas are designed to be those words, structures, and ideas needed most at their stage of development—not repetitive drills of words and structures that have no meaning for them.

As the days pass, my students learn that they can communicate their ideas, and they become more and more aware of how English words and sentences fit together. They also develop confidence that they are accepted. How important these feelings are to any learner! And how much more to the student learning English.

## CHAPTER 2

# WHAT IS A DIALOGUE JOURNAL?

> The use of this [reciprocal interaction] model in teaching requires a genuine dialogue between student and teacher in both oral and written modalities, guidance and facilitation rather than control . . . by the teacher. . . . This model emphasizes . . . meaningful language use by students rather than the correction of surface forms.
>
> *Jim Cummins, 1986, p. 28*

> . . . what the teacher must be, to be an effective competence model, is a day-to-day working model with whom to interact. It is not so much that the teacher provides a model to imitate. Rather, it is that the teacher can become a part of the student's internal dialogue—somebody whose respect he wants, someone whose standards he wishes to make his own. It is like becoming a speaker of a language one shares with somebody. The language of that interaction becomes a part of oneself, and the standards of style and clarity that one adopts for that interaction become a part of one's own standards.
>
> *Jerome Bruner, 1966, p. 124*

A dialogue journal, put very simply, is a conversation between a teacher and an individual student. However, this conversation differs from all others they may have, in or out of the classroom; it is written, it is completely private, and it takes place regularly and continually throughout an entire school year or semester. All that is required is a bound notebook and a teacher who is interested in what students have to say and committed to writing regularly to each of them. Students write regularly in the journal, as much as they want and about whatever they choose, and the teacher writes back—not grading or correcting the writing, and not responding with simple platitudes or evaluative comments such as "Good!" or "Interesting point!" The teacher is

a *partner* in a conversation, who accepts what is written and responds as directly and openly as possible, while keeping in mind the student's language ability and interests. The value of the dialogue journal lies in the open exchange of ideas that can occur and the concerned and warm acceptance by the teacher of the student's writing. Daily exchange of the journal is ideal, as the continuity of writing and immediacy of a response keeps a flow of ideas going and makes responding much easier and quicker for the teacher. If it is not possible to write and respond daily, it is crucial that the writing take place regularly, at least twice a week. Many teachers find it beneficial to write each time the student writes to maintain the sense of dialogue and avoid the sense of more formal, composed writing. Other teachers, who do not respond to each student entry, at least write regularly.

Let's "listen in" on the written dialogues between Leslee Reed and two of her sixth grade students who are at different stages of learning English as a second language. The first exchange is with Michael, a Burmese student, who wrote this entry 10 months after he began attending school in the United States and learning English. [These examples and those throughout this handbook are drawn from the actual writing of teachers and students. In all cases the writing is reproduced as it was written, without changes to grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Students' names are changed, except when they indicated that they wanted their real names to be used.]

*February 9*

Michael: Mrs. Reed you know on this week like the silly week. I don't know what happen on this week. Mrs. Reed what did you mean about the valentines you said we have to bring the valentines. Did we have to made the valentines for people our classroom. I didn't know what are you talking.

Mrs. Reed: No, you don't have to give anyone a Valentine. It is just fun to do. Sometimes we like someone but we do not tell them. We feel funny telling someone you really like them. Giving a Valentine is an easy way of doing it. If you want to give a valentine or 5 valentines—it doesn't matter. You do what you want about that.

*February 10*

Michael: Mrs. Reed I know what is the valentine but I don't know what I have to do and the valentine is we have to give the cards to someone and we I have to buy the cards but I can't buy the cards thats is the problems. I think I'm

not going to the sofeball because I did not do nothing about it and Ricardo said I could be the catcher and he break his primise.

Mrs. Reed: No problem! Anyone who wants to give valentines can. If you don't want to give valentines you don't have to.

Talk to Ricardo again! I'm sure he forgot his promise when others on the team began yelling at him.

Did you ever find your pen?

*February 11*

Michael: I didn't not find my pen. Happy Valentine! I want to give the cards to people but I can't give the cards to people. I give the one card to the simon. I think Level 10 hard me. Did you think Level 10 is hard for me? I saw the Thanksgiving Pilgrim in the book. You know, today morning U Chal put cards in every bag except Tony. I know why U Chal put the cards every card because he put cards into every bag so that he margar him. You said we are going to do the art with the shoe box, and you said you don't have the shoe box you can't do art.

Mrs. Reed: I am not sure what you said. U Chal put cards in everyone's sack so they don't *margar* him. What word did you put there? Please tell me.

Yes, we will do the shoebox art. Everyone who has a shoebox will do it. Have a happy vacation. I will see you in five days.

The second exchange is with Claudia, who is from El Salvador and had been in the United States for two and a half years when these entries were written.

*March 17*

Claudia: The new teacher or helper in our class is very good. I like her, don't you like her? Today she helped me & us a lot. I was just going to get down to get something she would get it for everyone. I hope she stays with us the whole year until the end. Tony didn't want any help though. Why doesn't Tony want us to help him?

I will try & bring my lunch every day from now on because the turkey stew & other lunches put me sick. I hate them. When I am very hungry I have to eat them but when I get to my house my stomach hurts & I am

sick for 3 days. Can't the teachers protest or say something about the food that they give here?

What do you feed chickens here? We have a hen that layd & egg.

Mrs. Reed: The lunches are not that bad! I've eaten them sometimes. You are wise to bring your own lunch. That is usually what I do, too. Today some people ate 3 lunches—so they must have liked them. You have such good food at home that nothing served here could taste so good!

Tony is embarrassed. He wants help, but he does not want anyone to know that he needs it. Offer to help him and if he says "no" then leave him alone.

Chickens will eat scraps of bread, wheat, seeds, water and some insects.

*March 18*

Claudia: Oh but the hen has some white lines in her dirt of her body that throws up by a hole. I don't know what you call it. She has wat it looks like worms, but little worms those white ugly worms & they are very skiny, what are they? do you know how to get the hen of her stomach sickness or is it usual for her to be like that because she is laying eggs and she could even lay 30 eggs so I do not know if it is usual or if it is a sickness of her.

oh poor hen she cooks & coocks when I say pretty hen in a low low voice & she looks like she is used to children because she is cook & cooking when I say pretty things, oh she's so nice!!!!

Mrs. Reed: It is normal for the feces (the waste from your hen's body) to have white lines in it. I've never heard of a hen having worms—but it is possible. Go to a pet shop and ask them or to a veterinarian. Who gave you the hen, maybe they will know.

We say that a hen clucks. It is a pleasant little sound as though they are happy. They cackle when they lay an egg! That is usually loud! Does your hen cackle?

I think hens like having people or other hens around, don't you?

Claudia: Yes I like & she likes people around her & when I talk she kinds of understands & when she doesn't she kind of looks up so I can tell her again whatever I told her & and then she understands me, oh you should see her. Maybe

> in the future I will bring it to school then we could study her & see how she is, looks, & how she eats, don't you think it would be a great idea, (I do).

Figures 1 and 2 show parts of these dialogues as they appeared in the journals.

In studies of dialogue journal writing in two of Mrs. Reed's sixth grade classes, one made up of native English speakers (Staton, Shuy, Peyton, & Reed, 1988) and the other, of nonnative English speakers (Kreeft, Shuy, Staton, Reed, & Morroy, 1984), we identified the following characteristics of the interaction, illustrated by the above examples:

- *The writing has the qualities of good conversation.* Both the students and the teacher can choose topics to discuss. Both can contribute equally, making comments and offering observations and opinions; requesting and giving clarification; asking and answering questions.
- *The writing is student-generated.* Because the students write before the teacher each day, they generally write about activities they are involved in and issues that interest them, as they happen. The teacher also initiates topics, but most often responds to the students' topics, supporting and encouraging their writing. Therefore, the teacher essentially shares control of the writing with the students (see also Peyton & Seyoum, 1989).
- *The writing is continual.* The daily journal exchange allows students to discuss certain topics with their teacher over a period of several days, weeks, or even months, such as the discussion of Valentine cards in Michael's entries and the hen in Claudia's entries. It is not necessary to say everything about a topic in one entry, and over time the writers begin to build on each other's thoughts, words, and manners of self-expression. Other topics might be introduced as they arise, discussed, and dropped when they are no longer important, e.g., the question about Michael's pen or Claudia's comments about the new teacher.
- *The writing is functional.* Students write to accomplish a wide variety of real purposes. They might request information (Claudia—"What do you feed chickens here?"), an opinion (Michael—"Did you think Level 10 is hard for me?"), or clarification (Michael—"What did you mean about the valentines?"); offer an opinion (Claudia—"The new teacher or helper in our class is very good. I like her . . ."); describe a personal problem

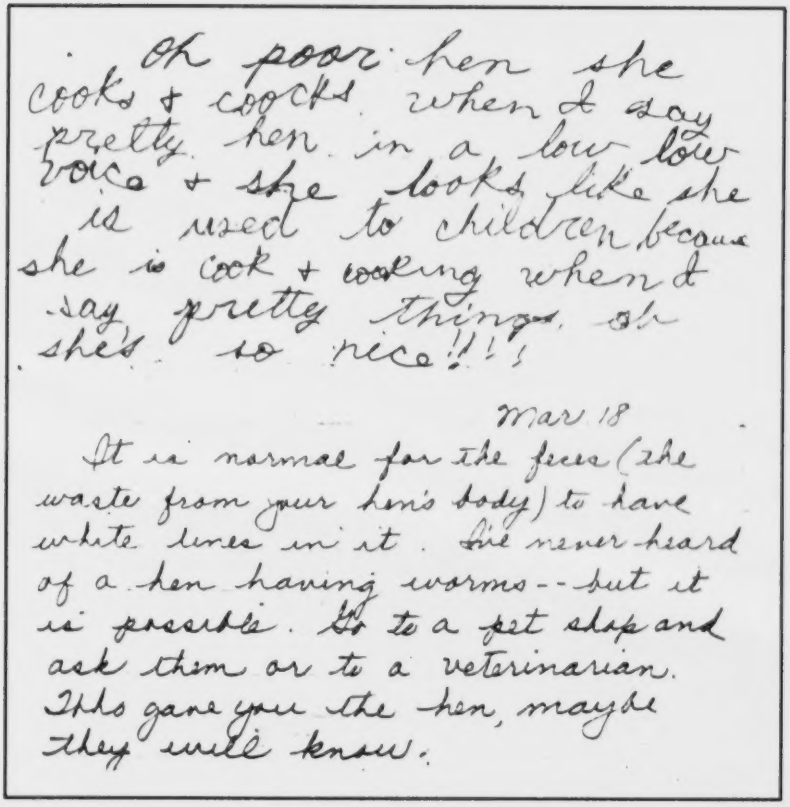
*Figure 1*

Feb. 9

Mrs. Reed you know on this week like the silly week. I don't know what happen on this week. Mrs. Reed what did you mean about the ~~ort~~ valentines you said we have to bring the valentines. Did we have to make the valentines for ~~people~~ our classroom. I don't know what are you talking.

No you don't have to give anyone a Valentine. It is just a fun thing to do. Sometimes we like someone but we do not tell them. It feels funny telling someone you really like them. Giving a Valentine is an easy way of doing it. If you want to give a valentine or 50 valentines -- it doesn't matter. You do what you want about that.

*Figure 2*


Oh poor hen she cooks & cooks when I say pretty hen in a low low voice & she looks like she is used to children because she is cook & cooking when I say pretty things. oh she's so nice!!!

Mar 18

It is normal for the feces (the waste from your hen's body) to have white lines in it. I've never heard of a hen having worms -- but it is possible. Go to a pet shop and ask them or to a veterinarian. Who gave you the hen, maybe they will know.

(Michael—"we have to give the cards to someone, and I have to buy the card, but I can't buy the cards thats is the problems"); or express a complaint (Michael—"Ricardo says I could be the catcher and he break his promise."; Claudia—"the turkey stew & other lunches put me sick. I hate them.").

- *The writing is varied in terms of topic, genre, and length.* Although students are usually allowed to write about personal topics, they may also be encouraged to discuss nonpersonal topics, such as things they are studying in school, books they are reading, or current events. They may write descriptions, explanations, narratives, complaints, or arguments with supporting details, as the topic and communicative purposes dictate. Entries or topics may be as brief as a few sentences, or they may extend for several pages.

## Variations on the Basic Journal Format

This handbook focuses primarily on one particular type of dialogue journal writing—a student-teacher conversation, handwritten and contained in a bound notebook, in which students write about topics of their own choosing. However, many variations on this basic format for interactive writing are possible and are being used effectively as well. These might involve varying the participants, the content of the writing, or the type of journal used.

### *Participants in the dialogue*

The dialogue journal partner does not have to be the teacher. Students can write with a classroom aide, a pairing which can be especially helpful if the aide knows the students' native language, and they can begin writing in that language. Students at upper elementary or secondary levels might be paired with each other. Nancie Atwell's (1984, 1987) junior high school students write to each other as well as to her about literature they are reading. Students just beginning to learn English might be paired with those who are more proficient, or students in one class might be paired with older students in another class. Heath and Branscombe, 1984, describe interactive writing between 9th and 12th grade students. Dialogue journal partners can be anyone who has the desire, time, and skills to keep the interaction going. They might be researchers working with the class (described in Heath & Branscombe, 1984; Samway, 1989), parents, or retired persons who want to become involved with the life of the school.

### *Journal content*

Rather than leaving dialogue journal topics completely open-ended, the teacher might want to focus the discussion on course content. Taylor (1988), Atwell (1984, 1987), Steffensen (1988), and Walworth (1985; 1990), report their successful use of dialogue journals in literature classes (with upper elementary, junior high, and college students) in which students use their journals to discuss books they are reading. Taylor's students also write with an outside researcher, with whom they share drafts of their writing and talk about their writing in progress (Samway, 1989). Journals can also be used in social studies, science, history, and math classes, providing a place for reflecting on course content, relating content to personal experience, and talking things over with another person who is immersed in the same classroom content (Borasi & Rose, in press; Rose, 1989; see also articles in *Dialogue*, September, 1989). Likewise, prospective teachers in teacher

training courses reflect with their professors about their new experiences and growth as teachers (Brinton & Holten, 1989; Roderick, 1986; Roderick & Berman, 1984; see also *Dialogue*, September, 1988). It is best, however, not to control the topic for discussion too tightly. Sometimes students simply need a place to air thoughts and feelings, even those which are not directly related to the focus of study.

*Type of journal*

The dialogue need not be written in a notebook at all. In classes with word processors that are easily accessible to all students, the "journal" may be on a disk passed back and forth. Entries are saved on the disk, just as they would be saved in a notebook, and printed out from time to time. Special software for keeping a dialogue journal, called *Dialog Maker*, is available as well (cf. Sayers, 1986a). With this software the teacher can combine general and individual messages to students, thus saving teacher writing time. If schools have access to electronic mail, messages can be sent without the exchange of disks.

With access to computer conferencing networks such as *Bitnet* or *The Source*, students can keep dialogue journals with other students across the United States or even in different parts of the world. The speed of electronic mail gives pen pal correspondence the immediacy of the dialogue journal (cf. Naiman, 1988; Sayers, 1986b). Another format is that of the oral dialogue journal, in which students and a teacher, or nonnative and native English speaking students, exchange cassette tapes. (See MacDonald, 1989, for a description.)

One essential feature of these journals is that they be a *dialogue*. Recently the practice of journal writing has become a standard part of the curriculum of many programs. Upon hearing about dialogue journals, some teachers say, "I've been doing that for years." What they are actually using, though, are personal journals, logs, or diaries, in which students write, but the teacher doesn't respond, beyond a few brief comments about the students' writing. A true dialogue requires that both parties make substantive contributions of more or less equal length and discuss some topics of mutual interest.

Whatever the variations in journal type, the basic features, principles, and strategies for dialogue journal writing are the same. Students have the opportunity to use writing to communicate: to express concepts that are important to them, to accomplish real purposes, to be read by an interested audience, and to receive a reply that is genuine and meaningful.

## CHAPTER 3

# WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING?

There are no shy students in the dialogue journal. Reluctant speakers are among my most eager writers. A Vietnamese girl who has tremendous difficulty with pronunciation and never speaks unless called upon writes long and meaningful entries in her journal. One day recently she wrote a beautifully constructed story. I was able to dispel another teacher's concern that she might have plagiarized a paper written for his class by demonstrating with her journal (after I had obtained her permission to share her writing) that her written work is far more sophisticated than her oral production would suggest.

*Harriet L. Hulings, 9th–12th grade ESL teacher*[1]

Teachers who use dialogue journals agree that their benefits are many and varied. We discuss here those benefits that are most frequently mentioned by experienced teachers.

### There Are Increased Opportunities for Communication Between Students and Teachers

I enjoy using dialogue journals because it helps me learn about the kids. I see a side of the kids that I can never see in class, because they talk to me and tell me about what they're doing and how they feel.

Juanita Zientara, 9th–12th grade ESL teacher[2]

---

[1]From a paper written for a graduate course for ESL teachers.

[2]This and other quotes from teachers and students are taken from transcripts of extensive interviews conducted by Joy Peyton during the 1987–88 school year. We are grateful to Gina Richardson for combing these interviews for appropriate quotes.

> I feel like I get to know the child better, and I can sometimes head off problems that might occur with students. If someone is having concerns about somebody else, I kind of work it around in the journals by writing to people, doing a little counseling.
>
> Kelly Miller, 4th–6th grade ESL teacher

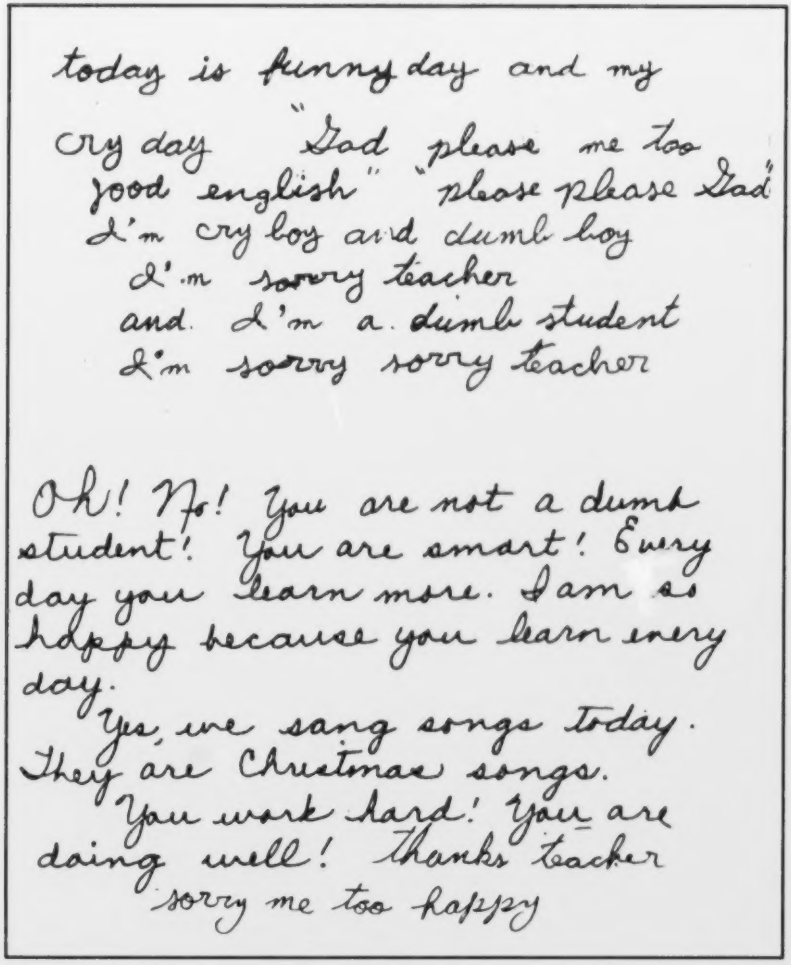
> It's a way your teacher can get to know you better, and you can tell her your personal things. Like if you hurt or something, she'll listen. I mean, she'll read it and write back. . . . There are some people that always keep their thoughts inside; they never break out anything. But they can write it in the journal because the teacher won't tell anyone. And I think you can get those ideas out. Get them off your back and stuff.
>
> 11th grade ESL student

One of the most often-cited benefits of dialogue journal writing is the increased communication between students and teachers created and sustained throughout the school year. Since most teachers do not have time to converse at length with individual students each day, regular written interaction increases student-teacher contact time considerably. This time can be especially helpful in ESL pull-out programs, in which students are pulled from mainstream classes for special instruction in ESL, and the ESL teacher sees the students for only brief periods during a week. In dialogue journals students have the opportunity to express themselves openly and in private, without being embarrassed about the nature of their concerns or the limits of their language to express themselves. At the same time, the teacher can praise good work and offer encouragement or solace without embarrassing the student.

Many teachers have found that the dialogue journal interaction has a positive influence on their relationship with particular students. Some students, who tend to say very little in school, write prolifically in their dialogue journals. Without the journal, the teacher would know little or nothing about them. Other students, because of undesirable habits or behaviors, create a negative impression in face-to-face encounters and have difficulty with teachers and peers, but in the journal reveal a more appealing personality. They and the teacher can then find common ground on which to build a more positive relationship.

In the journal students can express their frustration with learning English, as Andy (a sixth grade student from Korea) does in the interaction below. The teacher then has the opportunity to provide support and encouragement. A reproduction of the interaction as it appeared in the journal is shown in Figure 3.

*Figure 3*


today is funny day and my
cry day "God please me too
good english" "please please God"
I'm cry boy and dumb boy
I'm sorry teacher
and I'm a dumb student
I'm sorry sorry teacher

Oh! No! You are not a dumb
student! You are smart! Every
day you learn more. I am so
happy because you learn every
day.
Yes, we sang songs today.
They are Christmas songs.
You work hard! You are
doing well! Thanks teacher
sorry me too happy

Andy: today is funny day and my cry day "God please me too good english" "please please God I'm cry boy and dumb boy I'm sorry teacher and I'm a dumb student I'm sorry sorry teacher

Teacher: Oh! No! You are not a dumb student! You are smart! Every day you learn more. I am so happy because you learn every day.
You work hard! You are doing well!

In addition to language problems, students who have recently arrived in the United States must deal with many other issues as they adjust to a new school and new culture and learn how to cope in their new situation. They may be lonely and mourning friends and relatives left behind in their country, or they and their families may be experiencing considerable trials in the transition process. In the journal they can write about their experiences and concerns, and the teacher has the chance to reply with empathy and understanding. In this interaction Andy explains that he is sad because his father is still in Korea, and he can't wish him a happy birthday.

Andy: Today I am sorry my dad's birthday but I can't see, and I can't talk my dad so I am sorry to my dad.

Teacher: It is too bad that you can't see your Dad, but it's great that you're writing him a letter in English. Would you like some help?

Tong, a young child in a refugee camp in Thailand on his way to the United States, writes about how much he misses his grandmother, who remains in Vietnam.

Soon I will be in America so I will tell you about my grandmother who still lived in Vietnam. She lived in the island and had a big garden, mango trees and bamboo trees. She had many things. When I went there to visit her I was very happy. I loved my grandmother too much. She loved me, too. But when I escaped to Thailand I didn't say goodbye to her. Now maybe she is old and old. I think that she will miss me too much but I don't know when will I come back to see my grandmother again.

Students may also feel as if they are treated unfairly because of their cultural background. In the journal they can find a listening ear and some helpful advice. Juan, a 10th grade student from El Salvador, discusses his desire to be on the basketball team and his disappointment over not being accepted, and his teacher tries to explain why this might have happened.

Juan: I will like very much to play in the school team of basketball. I will try to come to play after school. The problem is I don't know what to do for to bee part of a school team. I like to play basketball very much. In my country I played for my school team and I was a good player and I wish to play here too.

Teacher: Mr. B is the regular basketball coach. Do you know him? He is one of the counselors and an awfully nice person. If you are interested in basketball, he could tell you about the teams at school and how to try out.

Juan: I want to talk to Mr. B and he told me it is to late for to be in the team. I felt so sad and I steal sad. I would liked to play for the school, but the things are different. My friends told me the coach is very straight and he does a descrimination to the spanish people or chines. I thought that is very bad because that make me feel bad.

Teacher: I'm puzzled by this. I know Mr. B. very well, and I've seen him really work hard to help some of the Spanish-speaking students he has as counselor. There are several Spanish-speaking students on the team. I think you missed the deadline for tryouts. Why don't you ask some of the other students when the deadline for tryouts was to see if you really did miss it? Then next year, you can make sure that you try out for the team in time.

Students may have questions about the new culture that they do not feel free to ask in public. The journal gives them individualized access to a competent, adult member of the culture. Because the information they receive is in written form, students can refer back to it later. Here, Widianti, a 20-year-old student from Indonesia, in an adult ESL program, asks about etiquette when a guest in an American home.

Widianti: I have so many question—can you tell me, what usually people do if sombody invite them to live in their house for about 2 days—I mean what should they do in that house (of american people). Whats the polite and the impolite things that they can or can't do as a guest in that house. Mary asked me to come to her house and I am affraid so much—because I didn't know what their habbit their good manner etc. I'm affraid if I make something wrong that they didnt want me to do that—or can I just relax and do like what I always did? another question. Should I bring something for them when I come? Should I talk to their familiy as I stay there? I need to know more about american habbit, manners.

Finally, in the dialogue journal students can state complaints about the school, classroom activities, or actions and decisions of the teach-

ers without disrupting the rest of the class, and the teacher can address those complaints in private. These two interactions come from a sixth grade student, Thuy, and a tenth grade student, Ravi.

Thuy: Are you send the letter to Mrs. Nancy Reagan yet? Why everybody send us something we have to write a letter to them? Why too we don't have a P.E.?

Teacher: If someone gives you something it is proper to say thank you. Because we cannot say thank you, we must write it. It is good manners.

We didn't have P.E. today because of the assembly, but we'll have it tomorrow.

* * * * * *

Ravi: I am sick and tired of school. I don't know why because they don't have a cooler in our school. It is always hot in this school. Sometimes I think of quitting the school. I think that the school is boring. Mrs. B why is it very hot in this school. I hate hot wether any way.

Teacher: It can get hot in my room because we don't have any windows, and the air doesn't circulate well through the room. When the heat is on on a cold day or the air conditioning is on on a hot day, the room is all right. However, when the weather is good and no heat or air conditioning are needed in the school, these rooms get hot and stuffy.

If students are pulled from regular classes for ESL instruction, they may write in the journal to their ESL teacher about problems they are having in the regular classes. The regular classroom teacher may not realize that there are problems, because he or she is not used to teaching ESL students or because the students are not able or do not feel free to communicate openly in the regular classroom. With the student's permission, the ESL teacher can quickly remedy the problem by discussing it with the other teacher or by facilitating communication between that teacher and the student.

These are only a few examples of the types of problems that students might discuss in the privacy of the journal. All students are faced with troubling issues at some point. The journal gives them a place to try to work out their problems with someone else.

### The Teacher Can Individualize Language and Content Learning

It doesn't really matter how proficient in writing students are. It is something they can all do and in which they can all achieve and experience some

sort of success, whether they dictate their entries to the teacher or write long pieces independently.

Ruth Sedei, 1st and 2nd grade ESL teacher

I try to keep more or less a conversational tone. I try not to talk down to the students, and I try to stretch them a little bit. But I also want to find a level on which we can communicate. I will often rework my sentences to try to find a word that I think they'll understand. I do want them to understand.

Dawn Center, 1st and 2nd grade ESL teacher

In most classes with nonnative English speakers, students have a wide range of English proficiency levels. Students just beginning to learn English, oral or written, may be unable to keep up with the work others are doing and feel lost. But even those students can put something in a journal—a picture or a couple of words if nothing more—and receive a response, thus participating in the activities of the rest of the class. In responding, teachers can adjust their language so it is appropriate to each student, at a level that can be understood but is still challenging. The two interactions below were written on the same day in Leslee Reed's sixth grade class. The first one is with Kemmy, a Vietnamese student who had recently started school in the United States, had never attended school previously, had a very low level of English proficiency, and, at the time this entry was written, was doing little in class besides simple language exercises and writing in his journal. The second comes from Michael, a sixth grader from Burma, whose entry about Valentine's Day we read earlier, and who was making considerable progress in learning English.

Kemmy: today we are doing spelling is good and today I am so happy so funny . . . sompob He have New journal and He so happy and I have two journal I am have two . . . Andy He 3 journal.

Teacher: Andy has his 3rd journal. Sompob has his 4th journal and Kemmy has his 2nd journal. You all are writing in your journal every day.

Today we had a spelling bee. Kemmy spelled words for us. It was fun. I am glad Kemmy is spelling.

* * * * * *

Michael: I know I was saying the bad language. I will stop saying the bad language. I know why I get in trouble and I don't

go out to play. I don't get in trouble. So I won't go out and play.

Today is friday the 13 and it is bad luck day because we got report card, math test and spelling test. How come people said friday 13 is the bad luck day?

Teacher: It is just an idea that people have! 13 is supposed to be a bad luck number and when it comes on Friday it is even more bad luck. Some people think Friday the thirteenth is good luck.

It is good for you to be out playing. It is very good for you to learn to control your temper and your tongue.

Kemmy uses simple vocabulary and syntax and repeats words and phrases he has learned so far. In response, the teacher uses simple sentences and words Kemmy knows and has used in his entry. She also refers to him by name rather than with "you" in the early stages of his writing, to catch his attention. His name was the one word he recognized immediately, and she hoped that upon seeing it he would want to read what she had written about him. (Later, when she knew he was reading and understanding her entries, she changed to "you".)

Vocabulary and syntax are considerably more advanced in Michael's journal, and he and the teacher discuss a cultural point and work through a problem he is having in school.

Because teachers can tailor their writing to the writing of each student, correct language forms and structures the student has attempted to used can be modeled in the context of genuine language use. In the example below the teacher uses and expands on many of the same phrases that Michael has used. The similar structures are italicized here to illustrate the point. They were not emphasized by the teacher.

Michael: Mrs. Reed today morning you said this is *my lovely friends* right? She told me about book story name is "the lady first in the air." She tells me *this lady* was first in the air, and she is flying the Pacifit ocean, and she lose it everybody find her but *they can't find it. They loocked in the ocean still not here*. Did she know everything of book?

Teacher: *My lovely friend Mrs. P* reads a lot. She has read the book about *Amelia Earhart*. It is a good story and it is a true story. *They looked and looked but never found her airplane or her.*

This example clearly demonstrates language modeling. Of course,

it would not be possible or desirable for the teacher to always directly model particular structures and vocabulary, for the interaction would quickly become stilted and unnatural. More often, modeling takes the form of correct English usage by the teacher, stated roughly at the student's level of ability, and related to something the student has written about. In the interaction below, for example, the teacher restates roughly what Andy has said about each topic but adds to it in each case, in a conversational style.

Andy: today morning is picture I don't teacher is help me. thanks teacher.
the present you picture. you is happy me is delighted. "thank teacher"
today tree is flowerpot change good change
and today is Miss V__ vicariousness
Miss P__ come

Teacher: Yes, I was happy to help you this morning with your work. The picture you made of me is very good. Thank you. I like it!
You put your cutting into a flower pot because it has roots on it. It is ready to grow.
Miss V__ is sick. I hope she will come on Monday.
Miss P__ is a good friend. Did she help your reading group?

One aspect of language modeling is the building of students' vocabulary. In the exchange with Andy above, the teacher writes, "Miss V__ is sick" in response to Andy's comment, "Miss V__ vicariousness." (Andy frequently used his Korean-English dictionary when writing in his journal, occasionally with startling results.) She also could have written, "Miss V__ is absent." In the interaction below with Michael, the teacher supplies a word in her response that Michael wants to use but doesn't know, and he then uses it in his next entry.

Michael: Mrs. Reed where did you got the Chinese or Japan *counter*. I don't know the name so I did not write it.

Teacher: The *abacus* is an old, old way of doing math. Chinese, Japanese and I would guess Burmese people have used that for an adding machine for hundreds of years.

Michael: My grandfather know how to count with the *abacus*. He used for the *count the money*.

Teacher: The *abacus* is a fine way of calculating! It takes a little practice, but it is really good.
[Emphasis added.]

In an exchange with Jung An, a sixth grade student from Korea, the teacher builds on his vague reference to "math" by reviewing the specific concepts involved in the class's study of geometry.

Jung An: I like the math we did to day but I feel sorry for Mrs. G__
[the substitute teacher]

Teacher: Teaching math to 34 students with different abilities is tricky. Reviewing geometry and using it to make a design helped everyone to use metric measure, and to use radius, diameter, and concentric circles.

When the teacher uses vocabulary that the student doesn't understand, the words can be explained and clarified in later entries, as in this interaction with Claudia, a sixth grade student from El Salvador, whose writing about her hen appeared earlier.

Claudia: Maybe I will be bringing more tamales or pupusas so I will try to do it.

Teacher: You are so thoughtful! Jana and I appreciate the delicious tamales!

Claudia: *Why do you say that I am thoughtful? I can't understand what you mean by calling me thoughtful*!

Teacher: You are thoughtful! You bring goodies for me and Jana and you help us a lot! That is really great!

Claudia: Oh thank you for saying that what I do is great.
[Emphasis added.]

The potential for individualized learning is not confined to features of language use, but can involve course content and other topics as well. Journal discussions can allow further exploration of any topic the student is interested in. For example, U Chal, a student from Korea, asks the questions below which provide an opening for further discussion of the sixth grade class's lessons on maps and for repetition of key terms and concepts from these lessons.

U Chal: What is the good map for sailer?

Teacher: The mercator map is a good one for sailors.

U Chal: How do the boat now what diretion he go?

Teacher: The boat uses a compass to know the direction it is going. A long time ago the sailors on boats looked at the stars to tell directions.

U Chal: What map don't have distosan?

Teacher: The best map is the globe. It is too hard to carry—so the best flat map is the equal area map. It shows almost no distortion.

U Chal: If polar map is distoriation why is good for planes?

Teacher: The polar map has distortion on countries near the equator. For countries near the poles it is very true. You ask a fine question. You are thinking!

When Edwin, a 10th grade student from El Salvador, comments about Central America, the teacher's response extends considerably the information that he presents.

Edwin: Yesterday I watched a news about the Contras in Nicaragua. It was a very interesting news. It said that the only country who can stop that revolution in Nicaragua and in the other Central American countries is the United States. It said that the other countries such as El Salvador, Honduras are in war because of Nicaragua. It said if the United States would bring peace to Nicaragua all the other countries such as El Salvador and Honduras would be in peace too. In the news said the United States don't want more yonger to died.

Teacher: I was interested in your comments about the war in Nicaragua. I think the U.S. will become more and more involved in the civil wars in Central America, and we will be hated by some of the people of those countries for being there. Then, if we are very much involved, we will be hated by others if we try to leave. That is more or less what happened in Vietnam. On the other hand, Vietnam was the other side of the world, and Central America is right here in the Western Hemisphere and close to the Panama Canal, which is vital to the U.S. I truly don't know what we should do, but I see it as very difficult for

us to bring peace to those countries. How can we avoid getting into the wars ourselves?

Edwin: I think that many countries get into wars just because of nothing, but other countries have enough reason to get into them. Many countries can avoid getting into the wars if they are more friendly and if they are peaceful countries. The United States is a friendly and peaceful country, but the United Sates always want to help other countries in anything she can and I think it is very nice of her. I guess what the United States want is to bring peace to all the countries in the World but that's impossible.

When the journals focus on the content of a course, rich discussions can occur that supplement and extend information discussed in class. For example, a team of fifth grade ESL and content area teachers in San Antonio has developed what they call *Think and Write Journals* in science and social studies (described in Kessler, 1989). Topics are not entirely open-ended, but rather finely tuned to units of study just completed. The format is also prescribed—a summary of the unit in the first paragraph, reflection on what part of the unit the writer liked best or would like to know more about in the second paragraph, and a statement about aspects of the topic that the writer does not understand in the third paragraph. Anita, a fifth grader from Mexico, and her teacher wrote the following:

Anita: I learned waht the Revolutan was about and how the cottin gin was working.

The part I liked best was whene we had the revolutan and went free and had freedom and liverty even if I don't undersand it.

I don't undersand why we brock from grait brente.

Teacher: The United States broke away from Great Britain so that we could be free and independent. We didn't want Great Britain to tell us what to do.[3]

Even though Anita's written English proficiency was limited, she was still able to reflect on her studies and express her puzzlement. The teacher's reply gave her not only an explanation, but also the spelling of Great Britain.

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[3]Excerpted, with permission, from Kessler, 1989.

The way that a teacher's writing can be varied to push individual students' thinking in different ways is demonstrated clearly in the following group of teacher entries written on the same day by Leslee Reed to students in her sixth grade class. The class had read a story about an owl, and several students mentioned it in their journals. The focus of each teacher entry was different, responding to the focus of the different student entries and challenging each student's thinking at a different level.

To Fernando: The owl's picture and story were fun to see. Do you think the owl is wise?

To Claudia: I've heard people say, "He's as wise as an owl!" I wonder why people say that. Did you think this owl was wise?

To Benny: How do you think the author felt about the owl in that story? Did he write about the owl as though it had human or bird characteristics?

To Nicky: Which of the characteristics of the owl were anthropomorphic and which were avian? Do you think the owl did remember? Is that avian?

### The Teacher Gains Information That Can Assist in Lesson Planning

> I find that journal writing is sort of the kernel of my teaching. When I sit down to do journals, I am doing a kind of resume of my day, and of each child. As I'm writing each child, I'm mentally thinking about that child. I conjure up in my mind that child on that day. . . . Then as I'm reading his journal I'm seeing if what I sensed as a teacher came through to him as a student. Often it becomes clear then in my lesson plans, OK, this did not go over well. I'll need to get this over from a different point of view. So [the journal] becomes a planning tool, a core from which I'm planning not only tomorrow's work but, frequently, next week's work. For me, it makes my whole school year flow, because I have a constant finger on the pulse of the children.
>
> Leslee Reed, 1988, pp. 70 & 71

Students' questions and interest in various topics expressed in the journals can provide input for planning future lessons. U Chal's questions about maps, shown earlier, and Michael's question, shown in the example below, showed the teacher how much they understood about the lesson, gave her a chance to re-explain it, and indicated what might need to be covered again with the rest of the class.

Michael: In the story of Yoko's grandmother I don't understand what mean the mouse is the most powerful being in the world?

Teacher: In our story the mouse was looking for the most powerful being to marry his daughter. He looked and looked. At last he learned that mice are powerful! They can do things that the sun, the clouds, the wind and the wall cannot do. Yoko's Grandmother told the story to show that we do not need to go looking for something more powerful. Each one of us has power. We need to use it.

The writing also gives the teacher information about students' language and writing abilities, a permanent, ongoing record of each student's progress in nonassigned writing that can be reviewed throughout the year. For example, contrast the following samples, excerpts from entries written early and late in the school year by Ruqayya, a fourth grade student who had recently arrived from Pakistan.

Ruqayya:
*Sept. 3*
I like to fly.
I like school.
I like to play.
I don't lik fish
I like this day.

*May 19*
today I was the all most the winner but I just miss the word. So the Sonia was the winner. I'm still very happy that she wan and in the aqua [reading] group their was too winner one was Rofina how was the winner and one was Nhung how was the winner.

During the year of writing Ruqayya moved from a list based on a familiar language pattern to more extended and complex discussion of a single topic. While the early simple sentences are grammatically more correct and the later entry has more errors, the later entry is much more advanced. The teacher can see how much progress Ruqayya has made, which structures she is attempting, which ones she uses correctly, which ones have not yet been acquired, and where she might concentrate her learning in the future.

Some teachers plan structure and vocabulary lessons around mistakes and interesting usages they find in students' journals. For example, if they see several students having the same problem with a

particular word or structure, they might extract several examples from the journals (after asking students' permission and changing anything that might allow identification) for a class discussion or exercise. The danger with picking out and discussing errors is that students might get the idea that they shouldn't be making errors at all, and lose confidence and fluency in their writing. Whenever the form of students' journal writing becomes the focus of class discussion, students need to be reassured that this attention is not intended as criticism of their writing, nor do they need to worry about making such errors in the future. Their writing, in this case, is simply being used as data for class reflection on English language usage.

The information the teacher receives is not limited to understanding of course content or language development. As students share the customs of their country, the teacher's knowledge about them and their world is enriched, and they can be assured that the teacher considers their culture worthwhile. In the exchange below, Mario, a sixth grader from Mexico, explains a custom in his native state, Chihuahua, Mexico.

Mario: you know why I like animals so much speallsh [especially] horses and dogs cause you know that thing you have on your soamck [stomach] when your bron they beeryed it on my grandfather ranch.

Teacher: I knew you especially liked animals but I did not know that it was because your umbilical cord was buried on your grandfather's ranch. You're very lucky—that makes you feel close to your Grandfather and to Chihuahua!

## Students Have the Opportunity to Use Writing for Genuine Communication

To achieve language flexibility pupils must apply whatever is studied to situations in which they have something to say, a deep desire to say it, and someone to whom they genuinely want to say it.

Walter Loban, 1986, p. 610

What I have learned from the journals is how to write about my ideas . . . I can write what I want, and when I am writing, I have ideas about what to write. I sometimes don't like it when teachers tell me what to write and I'm not interested in what I'm writing about. I feel bored and don't enjoy it. The best thing about the journal is it keeps you thinking about what you are writing.

12th grade ESL student

Despite the tremendous interest in the past several years in providing more opportunities for writing and in improving the writing of nonnative English speaking students, much in-school writing continues to be done in response to specific teacher assignments, about teacher-assigned topics, with no particular audience in mind, and for no purpose other than evaluation of the student's writing ability (Applebee, 1984). Interest in writing has brought with it the concern for writing assessment, and it is not uncommon for students in ESL classes to spend most of their writing time practicing for periodic tests in which they produce a writing sample for evaluation. The result is often canned, stilted writing, without personality or voice, that strives but fails to follow the models presented in class (Raimes, 1984).

The dialogue journal can be a completely open-ended writing experience, a time when students can write freely about anything they want to, in any way they want to; a time to use writing to think through an issue or problem, without being constrained by the need for perfect form. For some students, this might be their only nonstructured writing experience.

Not all teachers who use dialogue journals are particularly interested in their use to facilitate writing development, but those who are have reported encouraging results. Some have found that students whose writing on classroom assignments shows little promise express themselves much more clearly and eloquently in the journal. Compare, for example, the writing of two sixth graders, Ben, from the Philippines, and Simon, from Korea, on a typical kind of essay assignment at the end of a social studies unit—to compare and contrast the grasslands and desert—with parts of entries from their dialogue journals.

Ben's grasslands and desert essay, shown below, is somewhat dull and lifeless. He has fulfilled the assignment, pulling together his class notes on similarities and differences, but there isn't much else to it.

> The difference between the grassland is the grassland has water. And it also has grass. And it also has animals (like cows, chickens, dogs).
>
> The difference between the grassland and the dessert is the people that lives in the dessert move from one place (that has water) to the other. The dessert has only have few waters. The desert has only a few people that live there.

In contrast, sometime during the class's study of the grasslands and desert the teacher brought in some animal bones, and Ben wrote the following in his journal (this is an excerpt from a longer entry that day):

> The grasslands that we are doing is Europe. I found most of the information I wanted so far that I needed and the ones that you said to do. I got a chance to look at all those weird bones. They're weird because I usually see them with their skins, bones, and hair and *with* their eyes or eyeballs. Where did you get all of those bones? Did you got them from the desserts? I feel sorry for the turtles or the animals that lived in the deserts and got run over by those cruel men and women that runned over those sweet, nice, adorable animals. I like and loved tame animals.

There are grammatical imperfections in both pieces, but the same topic comes to life in the journal. Ben is engaged with the topic and able to relate it to his own experience, and he is writing to an audience he knows is interested in it as well.

Simon, a student with learning disabilities, produced a list of similarities and differences in his "essay," perhaps copied from his or some other student's notes.

differences

| | |
|---|---|
| grassland has rain | desert land has no rain |
| many people | some people |
| it has water | it has no water |
| they has big city | they has no big city |
| has many anlmer [animals] | has little anlmer |

similarities

| | |
|---|---|
| it has land | it has land |
| it has people | it has people |
| they can go fishing | they can go fishing |
| has air port | has air port |
| [etc.] | |

His dialogue journal writing had many weaknesses as well, but one day, after a bird he had been taking care of died, he wrote the following.

> I like the bird. I give some food but he ded but It was 95 to grist [degrees] but I think he was cool. I barisd [buried] the bird and I put a sign abut [above] the bird. I had many bird at Korea but I like the bird but he ded but I like the bird best in my life and he was a baby and he can not fly and I did not know what to do. I can not sit on the bird the bird will be packaah (?). I have pauve I had the bird went I grel up [I pretended (?) I had the bird when I grew up]. I barad my sife [I buried it myself]. When I grow up I will relmader [remember] the bird. It was the best bird I had in my life and my frilme [family] like too.

Simon's description of his experience with the bird is repetitious

and so full of spelling errors that it is indecipherable in places. He is also writing about a personal experience rather than an academic topic, which is probably easier for him. But in the journal he is showing that he can reflect on and write about events in his life. A teacher who had his assigned essay as the only example of his writing would have no way of knowing he had that ability.

As dialogue journal writing takes place over a period of time, it can become closely interrelated with other writing that students do in school, both influencing and being influenced by it. For example, the study of the grasslands and desert animals stimulated Ben's journal writing. A teacher might build on Simon's interest in and experience with birds to help him write a social studies essay focused on birds in the grasslands or desert.

An elementary ESL teacher observed that the relationship between journal writing and more formal academic writing is a natural one for her students:

> The students write in the journals in exquisite detail about things they do—field trips, family outings, school projects—and they want to use those pieces as the basis for writing they're doing in other classes. They come to me and say, "Can I copy this to use in class?" They've already done some thinking about the event, have already processed it in writing in their journal, and that's what they want to work with.
>
> Dawn Center, 1st and 2nd grade ESL teacher

High school teachers have also found that when students must produce samples of their writing for evaluation by the school or county, some like to work through the topic or a related one in their journal first, as preparation for the evaluated writing.

Likewise, as students learn more about writing processes and conventions in other activities and assignments, they begin to apply this knowledge to their dialogue journal writing—paying closer attention to paragraphing, punctuation, grammatical form, and the like. Teachers using dialogue journals for extended periods of time (at least one semester) almost without exception report that they see improvements in the form of this writing.

Dialogue journals as a writing activity for students are not personal journals or journal logs in which students write day after day without receiving a response. The teacher is also writing, giving students an ongoing model of the writing of a more competent writer; not only on the level of words, phrases, and sentences, but also of thought processes, organization of thoughts, and overall fluidity and coherence of expression.

Teachers experienced with dialogue journals are convinced that

they promote students' writing development. Quotations from some of these teachers provide a fitting conclusion to this section.

> I saw students who really felt like they had nothing to say become quite good writers: They were not able to express themselves well before writing in the journal simply because they'd never tried it before, never before had the opportunity to communicate through writing.
>
> Ruth Sedei, 1st and 2nd grade ESL teacher

> When students write about experiences they've had, they begin to realize that sentences and paragraphs can be expanded to portray the action, sights, sounds, and smells involved. Their entries get longer, more detailed, more lively because of the freedom they have to write . . . I think the students who at first didn't like to write have benefited from it the most, because they have begun to like writing. They have become participants.
>
> Dawn Center, 1st and 2nd grade ESL teacher

> The dialogue journal makes writing an everyday kind of experience. It's not just a thing that you do when you have a test or when you need to write a report or something, it can be a part of your everyday life. You can write about problems, hopes, desires, create a story, whatever. There's nothing to be afraid of. I don't want my students to be afraid, I want them to feel comfortable with writing and feel they can express thoughts on paper, and I think the journal has influenced their attitudes. They don't seem to be afraid of writing now. It is not a threatening type of thing to them anymore.
>
> Kelly Miller, 4th–6th grade ESL teacher

> Writing and responding in dialogue journals has definitely improved my students' writing. They let down their guard and stop worrying about their writing. They have paragraph tests to take, and it's the hardest part of their curriculum. They know that mine is a writing class, priming them to pass that paragraph test. If they don't pass it, they don't move up to the next class. The dialogue journal is a way to improve their writing without all that pressure. They just write to me about what's going on with them.
>
> Normandy Lee, 9th–11th grade ESL teacher

> There are only three times in the entire week that my students can write, just for the pleasure of writing [her students write in their dialogue journals three days a week]. It is not corrected or evaluated. It is a time for them to write to me, for me to enjoy reading what they have to say, and for me to respond to them. My goal is that they will understand that their words can command my attention, that they can get across feelings, can be poetic, can get something off their chest. I want them to believe that they can communicate by writing in English, that somebody thinks their writing is neat and understands what they wrote, no matter how convoluted it was.

And finally, I want them to see that they can understand what I write to them.

Juanita Zientara, 9th and 10th grade ESL teacher

## Students Have an Additional Opportunity for Reading

Two basic necessities for learning to read are the availability of interesting material that makes sense to the learner and an understanding and more experienced reader as a guide.

Frank Smith, 1985, p. 7

The best part of the journal is reading . . . no, writing . . . no, reading . . . well, both.

4th grade ESL student

Every Monday the kids come in and the journals are there and they want to read.

Dawn Center, 1st and 2nd grade ESL teacher

An important part of dialogue journal writing is the reading that occurs as a part of the interaction. Every time the teacher writes, a reading text is produced for student consumption—a text that is usually closely tied to the student's life experience and to what the student has just written, that incorporates and expands on some of the concepts, words, and structures the student has expressed, and introduces new ones. With beginning readers this opportunity can be a panacea. It is difficult to find reading texts for beginning readers that are interesting as well as manageable and don't require a lot of background information and concepts supplied by the teacher.

Reading can begin as soon as the student has put something in the journal, even if it is a picture or one or two words. The teacher can write a few words or a simple sentence in response, read it to the student, and then ask the student to read it alone. Thus, one of the student's first experiences with reading takes place in the context of genuine communication.

With more advanced readers, the benefit may relate more to the motivation to read that the teacher's writing generates. Even among those students who are reluctant to write in their journals or read other class materials, there are few who are not eager to read what the teacher has written to them.

Teachers report feeling the same compelling motivation to read what their students have said to them. One teacher, who always dreaded reading and correcting student papers, described driving

home from school and reading the journals opened on the seat next to her.

### Some Words of Caution

We close this section about benefits with some words of caution. First, the last two benefits discussed have to do with the development of reading and writing abilities. There is no hard, empirical evidence that writing in dialogue journals actually does cause improvement in students' reading and writing relative to other kinds of activities that students could engage in. Such a study would be very difficult to do because of the many variables involved. What we have presented here are testimonials by teachers and students, our own experiences with and observations of journal use in the classroom, and studies of the journal texts that were produced. These strongly point to the positive effects that dialogue journals can have on reading and writing.

Second, the benefits cited here seem to occur when the journals are not used for the primary purpose of improving reading and writing abilities, but for the purpose of promoting communication between students and teachers. Because of recent increased interest in schools in the development of specific skills, we cannot emphasize this point enough. There are many opportunities in the classroom, outside of dialogue journal writing, to work on developing various academic skills. When the journal is used for that purpose, it quickly becomes just another classroom exercise. The benefits discussed here are a result of the journal's being used as a way to communicate.

Finally, dialogue journal writing is not meant to substitute for an entire writing program, which must be much broader in scope. (See Jones, 1988, for a thorough discussion of this point.) There are important aspects of good writing that do not often occur in the journals. First, students do not often revise their writing content or style, a step that is crucial to producing a good piece of writing. Second, they do not receive direct feedback about its correctness or edit it, so there may be grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors that would be corrected in a more finished piece. Finally, the journals do not include all of the types of writing that students need to be able to do, including formal business letters, persuasive essays, and research reports.

Instead, dialogue journals need to be considered part of a complete program that includes all aspects of the writing process—brainstorming, drafting, composing, revising, editing, and publishing—as well as a variety of writing genres and styles (Jones, 1988).

## CHAPTER 4

# USING DIALOGUE JOURNALS WITH DIFFERENT KINDS OF STUDENTS

"When we give [people] the time, materials, and encouragement to write, they use whatever they *do* know in amazing ways."

*Lucy Calkins, 1986, p. 37*

One of the most compelling features of dialogue journals is their adaptability for use in different situations and with different kinds of students. Leslee Reed first used them with sixth graders who were native English speakers (Staton et al., 1988), and later with students from other countries learning English (Kreeft et al., 1984). When she and researchers studying her practice began to talk about dialogue journals and show examples of the students' writing, teachers across the country and overseas immediately saw the contribution that journals could make in their own classrooms and started using them with their students. Dialogue journals are now being used in a wide variety of educational settings.

In university courses, students interact with professors about a wide range of topics depending on the nature of the course—including concepts covered in the course, literature being read, writing in progress, adjustment to a new culture, and career goals (Steffensen, 1986, 1987, 1988; chapters in Peyton, 1990a). In these dialogues, students have consistent opportunities to use English in a variety of ways and to use and further develop higher levels of thinking and self-expression.

Writing with professors allows prospective and practicing teachers in teacher training courses and in in-service workshops to reflect on course content, their experiences in the classroom, and their development as teachers, and prepares them for keeping journals with their

own students (Brinton & Holten, 1989; Roderick, 1986; Roderick & Berman, 1984; see also articles in *Dialogue*, September, 1988).

In adult basic education and literacy classes, adults at the beginning stages of learning English, or native English speakers who are nonliterate, can move beyond practicing discrete skills and slowly begin to experience written English as a means of personal empowerment, as they learn to discuss issues that are important to them (Auerbach & McGrail, in press; Hester, 1986; Klos, 1988).

Children at lower elementary levels in ESL and bilingual classrooms sometimes begin the dialogue journal by drawing or writing a few words, and gradually gain more facility as they continue to write and read the teacher's responses (Bailes, Searls, Slobodzian, & Staton, 1986; Flores & García, 1984; Peyton, 1990b; see also articles in *Dialogue*, April 1989). For migrant children, who may have had interrupted school experiences, dialogue journals can provide a highly social, nonthreatening way to lead them into other kinds of school-related reading and writing activities (Davis, 1983; Hayes & Bahruth, 1985; Hayes, Bahruth, & Kessler, 1986).

For foreign language students (Martin, 1989; Pesola & Curtain, 1989; Popkin, 1985), as well as for deaf children and adults, for whom English is often a second or foreign language (Bailes et al. 1986; Staton, 1985; Walworth, 1985, 1989; articles in *Dialogue*, December, 1987) the dialogue journal provides the opportunity to extend the use of English or the foreign language in an authentic, communicative way.

Dialogue journals are also used with mentally handicapped and learning disabled adults (Farley, 1986; Flores, Rueda, & Porter, 1986; Peyton & Steinberg, 1985). For some, who previously had been considered nonreaders and -writers, the dialogue journal becomes their first and most extended reading and writing experience.

Teachers and counselors of high risk students, who are not necessarily language limited but who have demonstrated little success in school, have found that these students can be motivated to read and write in a dialogue journal. The safety and distance of written interaction can open up communication possibilities that are blocked in oral, face-to-face conversations (McGuire, 1986; Staton, 1987).

In short, dialogue journals have proven flexible and adaptable to a wide variety of communication settings, and teachers continue to report success with them in situations that broaden the range still further. In this section we explain some ways that they can be used with different levels of students learning English.

## Beginning Writers

> My own view is that every child who can talk has the capacity to learn to write and also to seize the possibilities of written language with enthusiasm.
>
> Frank Smith, 1983, p. 81

> I think that all students benefit, but those at beginning levels benefit a lot. They have to start producing, they can't just sit back and do nothing, and it's a non-threatening way to get started. They just start out trying their wings, and I'm always amazed at what they can do.
>
> Ruth Sedei, 1st and 2nd grade ESL teacher

With young children who are just learning to read and write in English or with adults who are nonliterate, either in their native language or in English, dialogue journal writing can be introduced whenever the student feels comfortable in the classroom and has developed some oral language facility. It can start out as an interactive picture book, in which student and teacher draw pictures for each other. As the student begins to learn to write letters and words, the teacher can label the pictures or write brief descriptions or explanations below them. Very quickly the student learns that marks on paper can convey a message to another person.

Ruth Sedei, for example, started using dialogue journals with her first and second grade students, all of whom were nonnative English speakers beginning to write in English and some of whom were nonliterate in their native languages, about a month after school began. They had adjusted to the routines of school life and had developed some oral language facility and some knowledge of words and letters. For one week she modeled the process of writing each day by thinking aloud about what she might write that day, exploring and deciding on some topics, and writing on a large sheet of butcher paper as the students watched. Then she discussed with them her process and what she had written. The next week, students wrote and drew on large sheets of looseleaf paper, and the class discussed what individual students had done. The third week the students received their own dialogue journal notebooks.

Mrs. Sedei's students spend the first 15 minutes of each day writing and drawing in their journals, while she takes care of such details as collecting lunch money. When they are finished, they place their journals in a box labeled "Journals" in a corner of the room. Later in the morning, during individual reading and writing time, those who

wish to can continue writing in their journals before going on to their other writing work. Mrs. Sedei and an aide, working separately, take the journals from the box and spend about 20 minutes calling students over one by one for the students to talk about what they have drawn and written and to read their entries aloud. With students who have little to say about their entries or cannot remember what they wrote, questions and comments help them to remember, talk about, and extend their entries orally and to understand that whatever they wrote or drew is informative and valuable. Mrs. Sedei writes a reply immediately, writing slowly and reading aloud as she writes, and then she and the student read the reply together and sometimes discuss both its content and form. Students who want to write their entries rather than draw but are not yet able to do so alone can dictate them to Mrs. Sedei, the aide, or a peer tutor, who writes them as the student's entry, responds in writing, and helps the student read both the entry and the response.

The following examples give an idea of what beginning writers can do. (See also Peyton, 1990b, for a more detailed description of Ruth Sedei's approach with beginning writers and examples of young children's dialogue journal writing. For a profile of the development over time of a beginning writer see the profile of Catalina, a first grader from Colombia, in Chapter 8.) Figure 4 shows one of Catalina's early entries. She began by drawing pictures and asking for help to write the words she wanted. In her responses, the teacher tried to use some of those words. In Figure 5, José, a third grader from Belize, drew a school and labeled it with words he was learning. The teacher entered into the activity by labeling some of the picture herself (*kid* and *teacher*), and used some of José's words in her one-sentence response.

Figure 6a & b show a more extended interaction between Michelle, an eight-year-old deaf girl, and her teacher, who is also deaf. Michelle drew two "banana people," with a baby in the stomach of the woman, and the teacher commented on the baby. Michelle's responding picture shows that she understood what the teacher wrote. She also did some writing of her own, picking up on the word "baby."

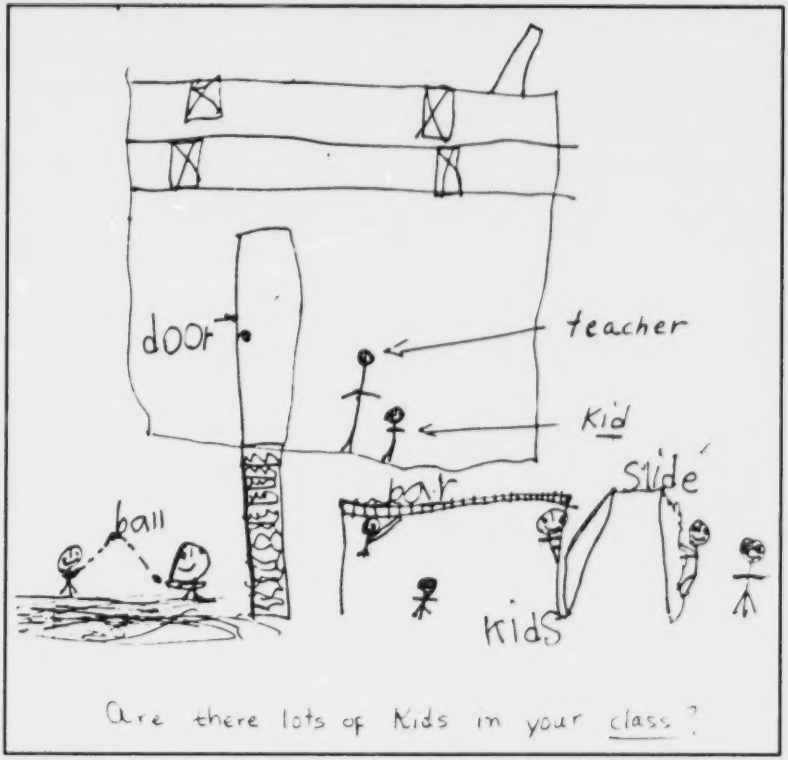
Katie (Figure 7a & b), another deaf child, was doing much more writing than Michelle, but she made use of all means available to communicate—words, pictures, signs. If there was a word she didn't know how to write, she drew a picture of it (a hedge trimmer), or the Sign Language sign for it (the joined hands for "again"; the sign of the cross for "hospital"), or she spelled it as best she could ("side" for "said"). In her responses, the teacher included some of the words for things that Katie had drawn, modeling for her the language she needed, and also building on Katie's topic so she could read and write

*Figure 4*

October 2

Do you read books at your house? What books do you like to read?

*Figure 5*




more about it. The result is an extended discussion about Katie's trip to the hospital.[4]

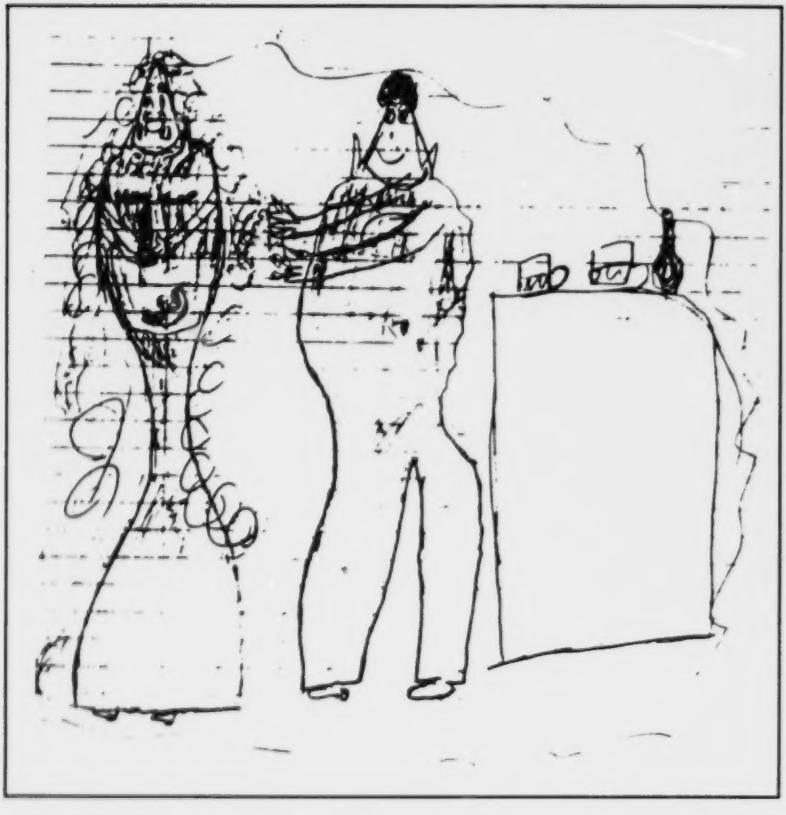
Although these two children are deaf, they can also be considered nonnative English speakers, since their first language is some form of Sign Language and written English is essentially a second language for them.

However the written interaction is begun in the early stages, students quickly realize that whatever they can say or sign can also be written. They see that their writing communicates something to someone else who wants to read it and who will always respond. What they read in that response is closely tied to their own writing efforts.

As students begin to become more aware of print, their journal entries

[4]Both examples are reprinted, with permission, from Bailes et. al., 1986.

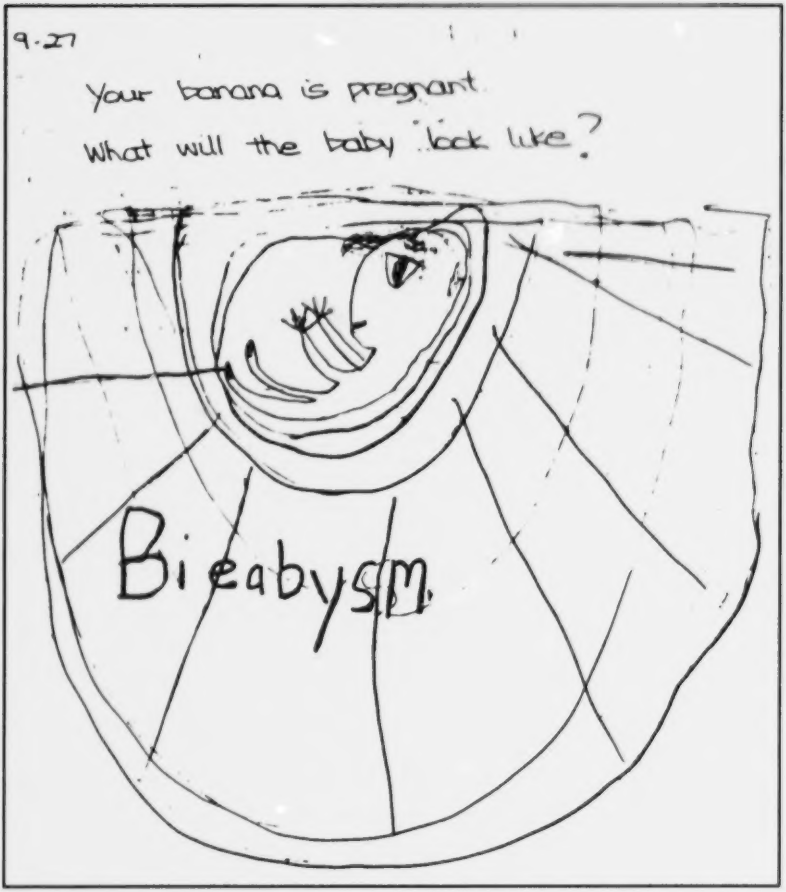
*Figure 6a*



are often based on print they see around them in the classroom. The blackboard, posters, and books become a valuable resource for writing. One first grade ESL student, for example, labeled her picture with the names of fellow classmates, copied from their desks (Figure 8). Another copied the first part of the name of Christian, another student, for his entry about Christmas (Figure 9).

Phimporn, a 12-year-old from Laos, was placed in a sixth grade class because of her age, but she had had no schooling before starting school in the United States, was nonliterate in Lao, and had practically no oral English facility. As soon as she learned a little oral English, she started writing in a dialogue journal. The journal writing was a comfort to her, because it was a place where she could write and read like the other students in class. Her first entries consisted of structures she was practicing orally. When she exhausted those

*Figure 6b*




structures, she copied whatever she saw on the chalkboard or on charts in the room (Figure 10a, November).

As students continue to write in their journals over time, they accumulate an ongoing record of their own words and of messages written to them, which can become a reference that is always available for their further writing. They gradually move away from their dependence on environmental print and begin to sound out words and use invented spelling. In Figure 11, for example, Catalina, whose earlier entry was shown in Figure 4, writes, "I am happy with my crayons and my pencil. Today I am using my pencil and my crayons."

Students also move from writing only about objects in their imme-

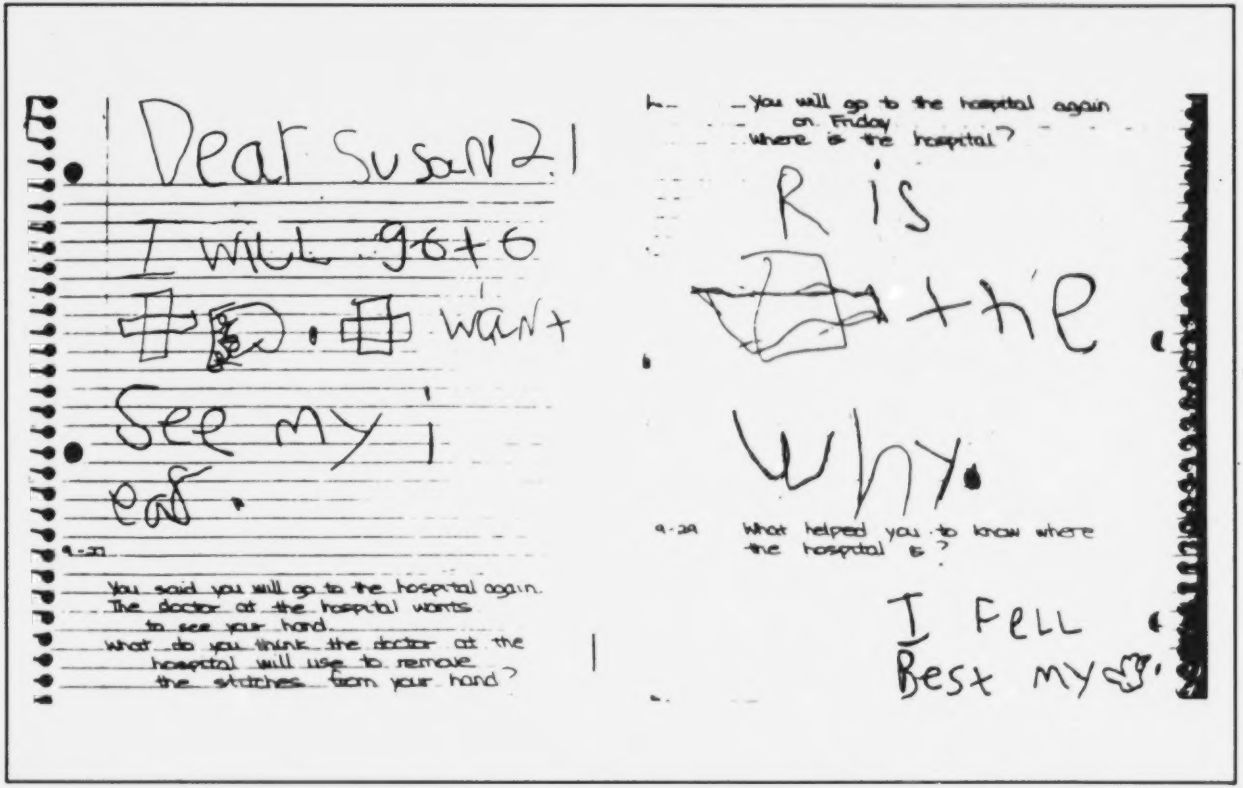
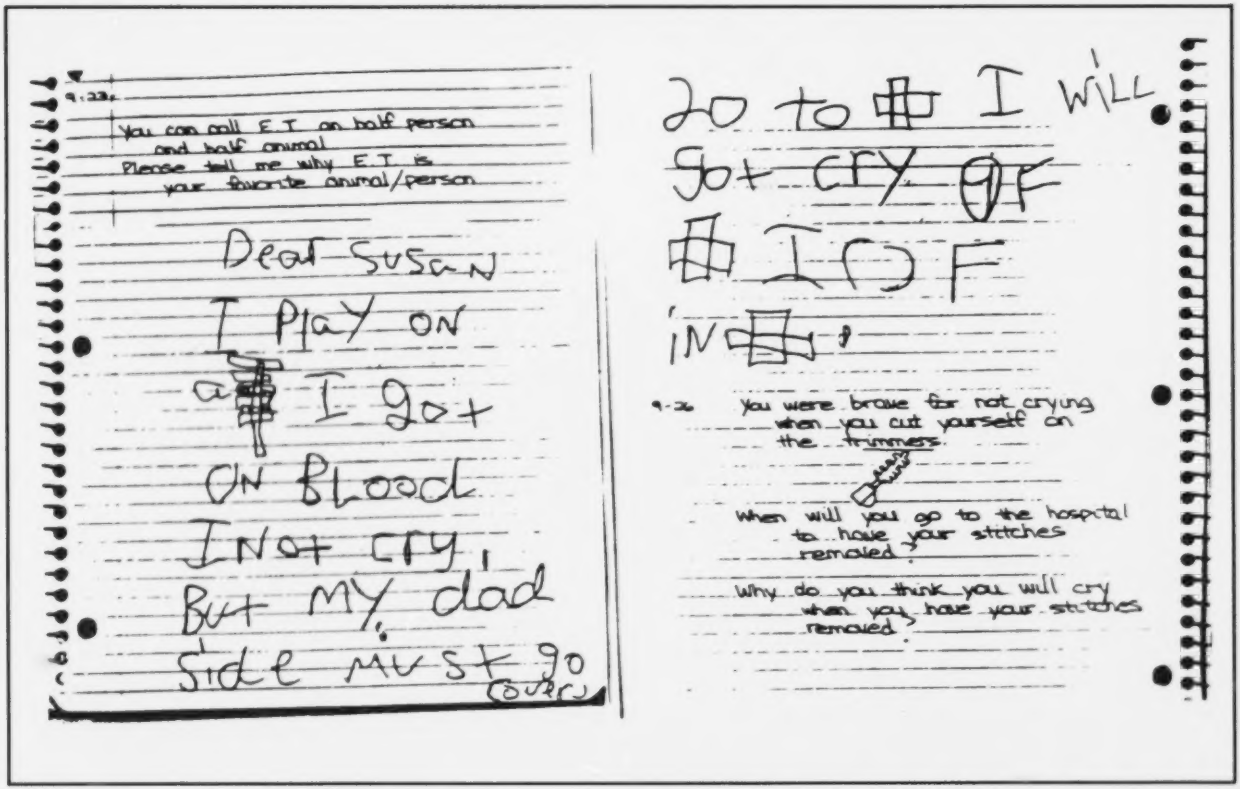

Dear Susan 21
I will go to
the hospital on
Friday
I want
to
See my
cat.
9-28
You said you will go to the hospital again.
The doctor at the hospital wants
to see your hand.
What do you think the doctor at the
hospital will use to remove
the stitches from your hand?
You will go to the hospital again
on Friday
where is the hospital?
R is
the
why.
9-28
What helped you to know where
the hospital is?
I Fell
Best my

*Figure 7a*



9:22 You can call E.T. an half person and half animal
Please tell me why E.T. is your favorite animal/person

Dear Susan
I play on a [illegible] I got ON Blood I not cry, But My dad side must go (ouch)

20 to [illegible] I will
got cry [illegible]
[illegible] I of F
iN [illegible]

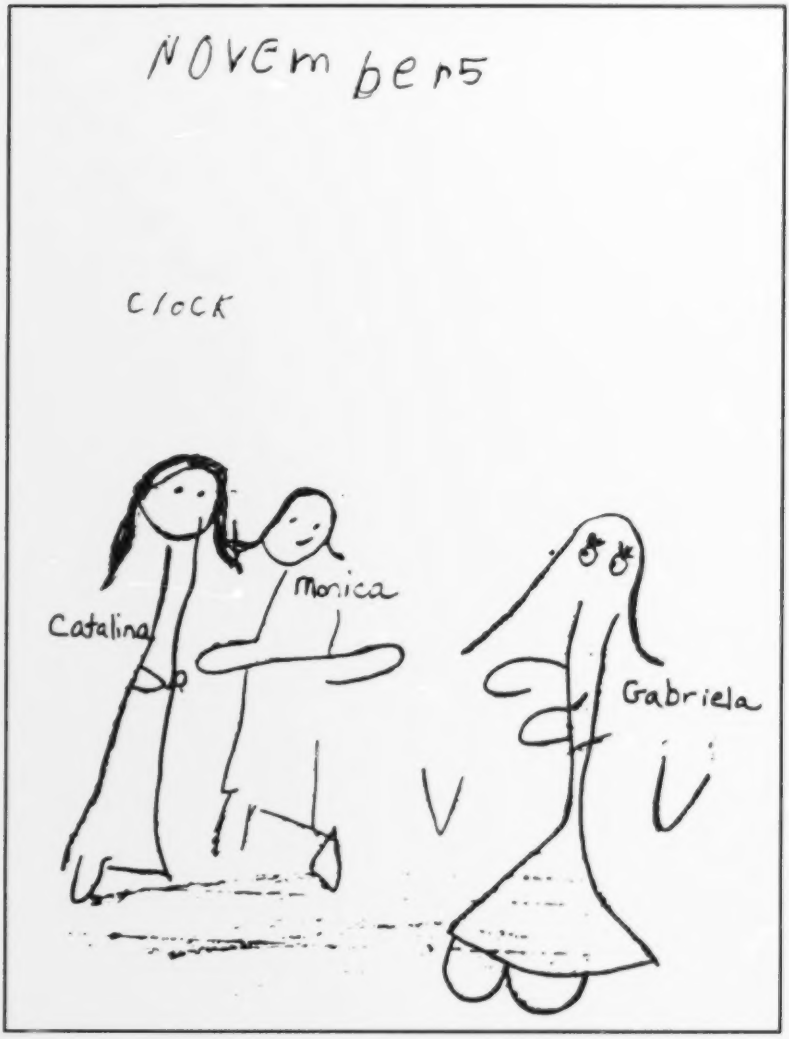
9-26 You were brave for not crying when you cut yourself on the trimmers

When will you go to the hospital to have your stitches removed?

Why do you think you will cry when you have your stitches removed?

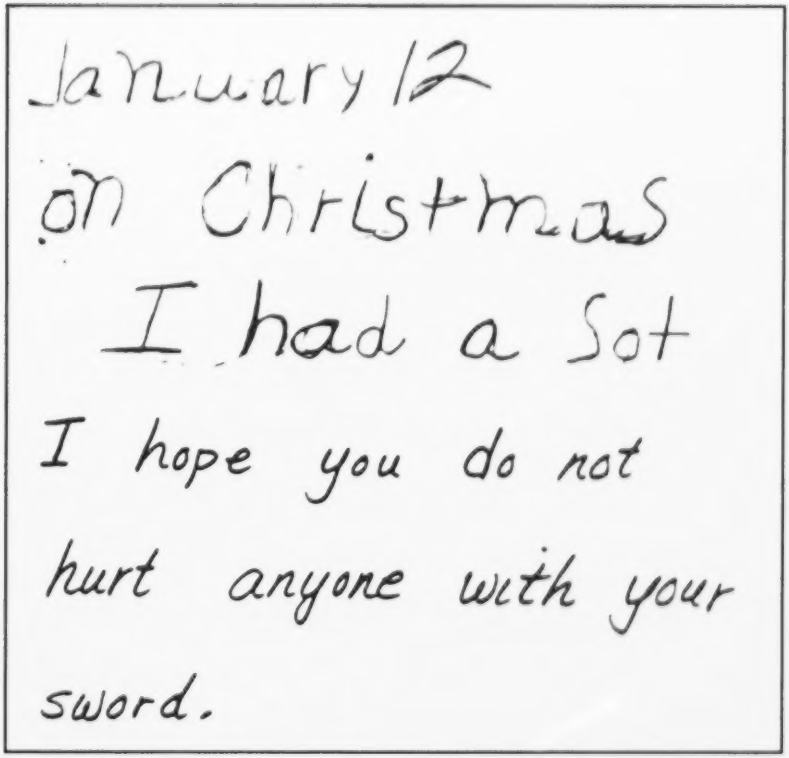
Figure 7b

*Figure 8*




diate environment to writing about activities as well—initially, activities occurring in the present and, gradually, past and future ones. They also begin to show evidence that they are reading the teacher's writing and writing to the teacher as audience. This kind of development is shown in Figure 10b in Phimporn's June entry. She has moved from memorized structures and copying to writing about thoughts

*Figure 9*



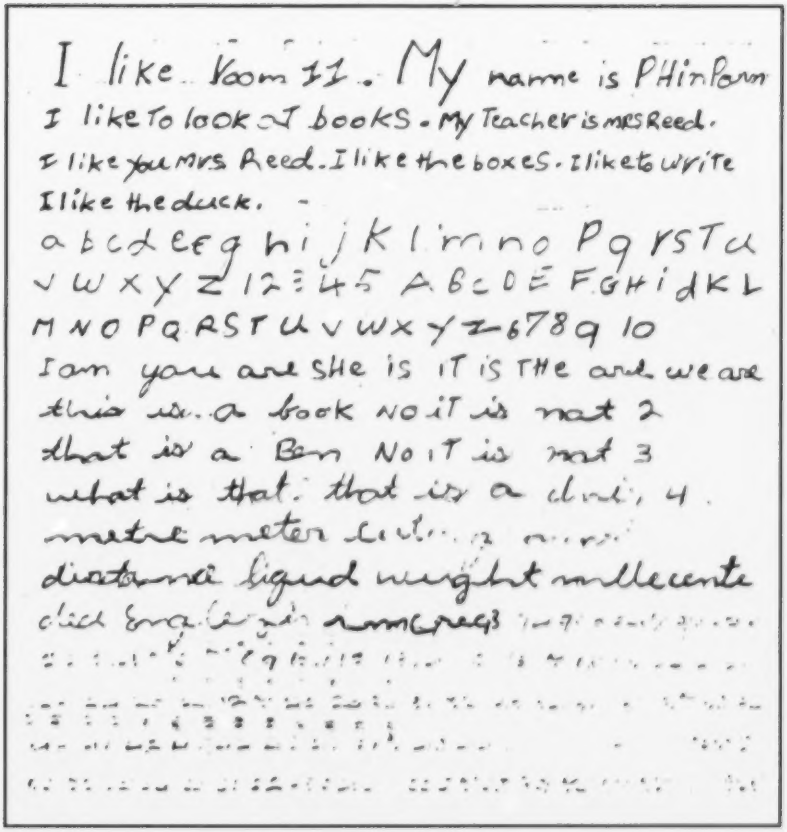

and events, and she is asking and answering questions with the teacher.

### Literate Writers

> Human beings have a deep desire to represent their experience through writing.
>
> Lucy Calkins, 1986, p. 3

Students who are literate in their native language and more advanced educationally can begin to write independently in their journal very early. Keum, a sixth grader from Korea, knew very little English when he started school in the United States, but he did know how to write in Korean. Early in the year he frequently used his

*Figure 10a—November*

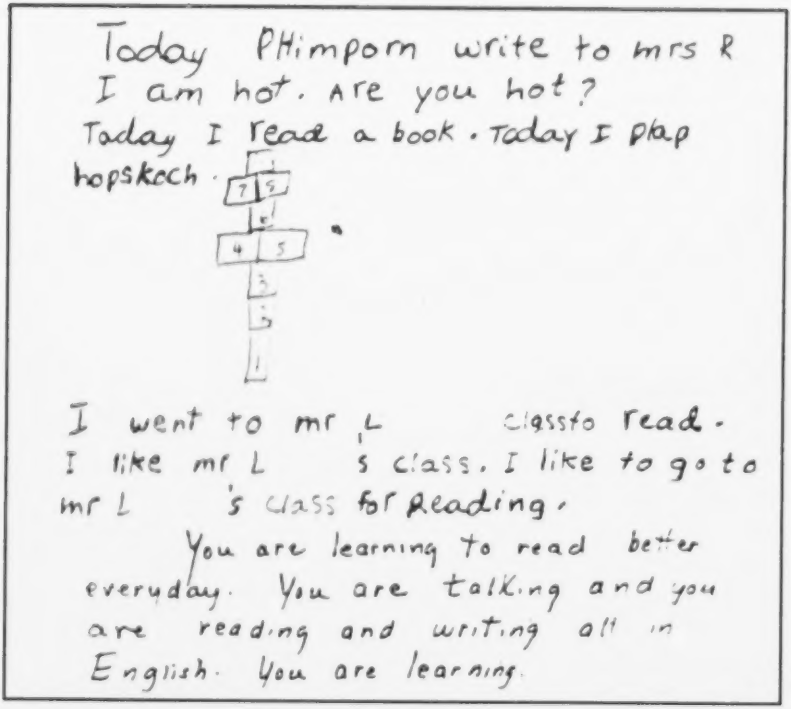

I like Room 11. My name is PHinPorn
I like To look at books. My Teacher is mrs Reed.
I like you Mrs. Reed. I like the boxes. I like to write
I like the duck.
a b c d e e g h i j K l m n o P q r S T u
v W X Y Z 1 2 3 4 5 A B c D E F G H i d K L
M N O P Q R S T U v W x y z 6 7 8 9 10
I am you are she is it is the are we are
this is a book No it is not 2
that is a Pen No it is not 3
what is that. that is a dog, 4.
meter meter
diatonic liquid weight millecente

Korean-English dictionary to write his entries and to read the teacher's entries, as shown in Figure 12.

If the teacher or a bilingual classroom aide knows the student's native language, the dialogue can begin in that language rather than in English. After a few weeks some English words can be included—names of foods, school items, or other English vocabulary the student has been exposed to. As time progresses and more and more English words are included, the student may begin writing some English words as well, and the transition to English is made gradually, as the student seems ready. This assumes, of course, that the goal *is* for the student to learn English. If that is not the goal, then the dialogue can continue in the native language.

David, a fifth grader from Bolivia, for example, began the year

*Figure 10b—June*


Today PHimporn write to mrs R
I am hot. Are you hot?
Today I read a book. Today I plap
hopskoch.
I went to mr L classto read.
I like mr L s class. I like to go to
mr L 's class for Reading.
You are learning to read better
everyday. You are talking and you
are reading and writing all in
English. You are learning.

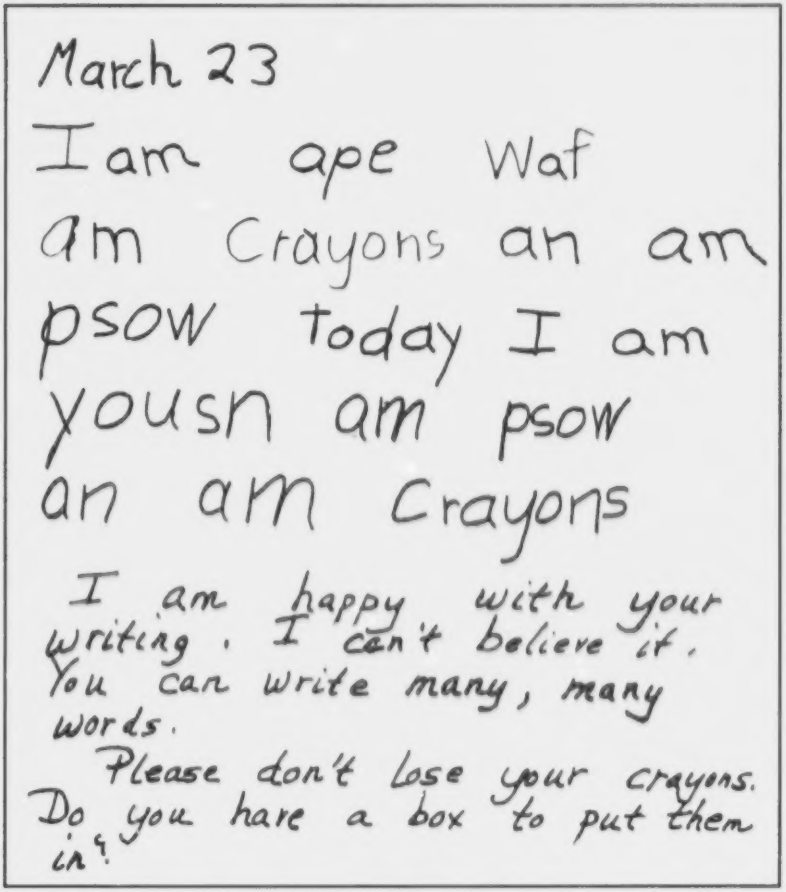
writing in Spanish (October entry below) and the classroom aide responded in Spanish. As David's English vocabulary increased, he began to insert English words into his entries (November). By March, he and the teacher were writing consistently in English. There is some evidence of the influence of Spanish on his spelling ("jav" for "have," "liro" for "little," and "besbol" for "baseball") and word order ("the childre liro" for "the little children"), but many of the nonstandard features of his early writing (incorrect separation of words, incorrect use of capital letters, and lack of punctuation) have cleared up.

*October*

David: Nosotros fimos con mi hemano al parque a jugar con bisicleta des pues volvimos nosotros amicasa y salimo Hase compras al a hacer despues volvimos a mi casa y luego dormimos ala a manecer me levant y fuia laescuela.

[Translation: we went to the park with my brother to play on our bikes. After we came back home, we went

*Figure 11*


March 23
I am ape Waf
am Crayons an am
psow today I am
yousn am psow
an am Crayons
I am happy with your writing. I can't beliere it. You can write many, many words.
Please don't lose your crayons. Do you hare a box to put them in?

out shopping and later returned home. We went to sleep. In the morning I got up and went to school.]

Teacher: Ahora me gustaría saber qué compraron cuando fueron a hacer compras y a qué centro comercial fueron. Por ejemplo, a mí me gusta el centro comercial de Seven Corners porque es más pequeño, y encuentro casi siempre todo lo que quiero.

[Translation: Now I would like to know what you bought when you went shopping, and which shopping center you went to. For example, I like Seven Corners

Figure 12

Nov. 28

I am in Room 11.

Hello, Keum! I am glad you are in Room 11!

NOV. 29

Today I have Korean books

Keum can read the Korean books. Keum can read some words in English.

NOV. 30

TODAY I LEARNED MORE ENGLISH. I LEARNED TO SPELL WORDS.
(MRS. REED

Good for you, Keum! You are learning some English words every day. You have friends in Room 11. You have fun with your friends

shopping center, because it is smaller, and I can almost always find everything I want.]

*November*

David: Yo cuando llege a este pais no sabia el in gles, fumos con miermano alas clases de verano luego termino las clases nos fumos a nuestra casa . . . en la prueba yo mispell box no tengo mas que decirlo.

[Translation: When I came to this country, I didn't know English. I went with my brother to summer school. When I finished classes, we went home . . . on the test I misspelled "box." I don't have anything else to say.]

*March*

David: yes in Bolivia have 2 dog and jav a big animals and liro animals, and snake and a condor. and the miro the park and the parck have the childre liro play and jav soccer and besbol.

Teacher: I think your park is very, very big. Does your zoo in Bolivia have pandas? I wish our big pandas would have a little baby panda someday.

A profile of the year-long development of another student, Miguel, who also began writing in Spanish, is presented in Chapter 8.

### More Advanced Writers

I think the more advanced students really benefit from the dialogue journal because they can ask questions about things. If we are studying some content area, we can just take off from where we stopped in class and explore it together.

Kelly Miller, 4th–6th grade ESL teacher

With students who are more proficient in written English, the journal is an excellent place for discussing topics being studied in class, current events, or personal concerns. It is also an opportunity for developing a more equal relationship between student and teacher, with the roles of teacher and student temporarily suspended, while they become collaborators in a discussion. One example of such collaboration comes from U Chal, a sixth grader from Korea, whose discussion of maps was shown in Chapter 3. U Chal was an extremely motivated student and loved to discuss what he was learning in science and geography classes.

U Chal: I am doing the report about White sharks and when I finish I am going to do about Dolphins if I have time.

In Brazil they only use Celsius they have Fahrenheit but they use Celsius to see the temperature to cook and the doctors use only Celsius to see the body temperature.

Teacher: You know Celsius better than Fahrenheit temperatures then, don't you? We are going to be doing some thermometer reading here in the room. We'll use both scales.

Dolphins or porpoises are unique animals. They seem to have a language.

U Chal: I never read about Fahrenheit until I come to the U.S., the first time I come I saw a film of doctor and they find that one monkey had a fever and when he got the fever his body temperature was 115 F but I thoughth they was talking about 115 C but now I know the different of Celsius and Fahrenheit.

I know and I read that scientist was stunding about dolphins language. Last year when I was in Brazil I was in the beach and I saw a dolphin dead on the sand and when I touch the skin is like sofet and then when I eat the lunch and I go to see the dolphin some birds was eating the dolphin.

Teacher: The dolphins have even been trained to do undersea work for the Navy. They seem to have an intelligence. The birds help to clean the beach by eating the dead animals. The dolphin's skin has no scales—we expect an animal that looks like a fish to have scales.

Another student, a sixth grader from the Philippines, loved to discuss events that were prominent in the news at the time— popular music groups, the Academy awards, the Presidential election, space initiatives. In the interaction that follows he and the teacher begin writing about a "Nemesis" meteorite which may have struck earth in prehistoric times, possibly causing a dramatic drop in temperature and the extinction of the dinosaurs. They then move on to discuss the things that scientists are learning from space exploration.

Ben: . . . That five days vacations was fast! It seems like yesterday we had the first day off of the five days vacation. It feels like a fire ball passing.

Speaking of fire balls. Did you listened to the news

about a meteor about Earth's size might collide with Earth? They might have figured out about the dinosaurs.

They think that a meteor might have clided with Earth a long, long time ago during the dinosaurs time. They think that's going to happen again. But they already know what to do. There going to send a remote control rocket right into the meteor so it wouldn't collide with earth. They I think there going to send the powerful rocket in the whole wide countries or world.

Teacher: Yes, I heard about the meteor theory being a good way of explaining what happened to all of the dinosaurs. I'm not worried about getting hit with another meteor!

Ben: I know. There's nothing to worry about. They will think of using rocket. There's a lot of way to destroy those meteor that comes near and skid near Earth. I wonder how many planets did they explored beside Venus and that planet that has a ring Saturn. It was amazing when they discovered that Venus has a ring just like Saturn. Our Scientist today is getting better and better all the time. Pretty soon there going to be all famous and explore planets that never had been explored before in life . . .

Teacher: . . . Some of our scientists will become famous because they are learning more and more about space. Saturn has 52 rings—not just one. They've also discovered that some of the rings are braided like a chain!

Ben: An it also has two moons traveling at the same time around Saturn. Isn't that right? But there's more than two moons that I now. It's really, really amazing how they discover things like that with modern machines and all. Another planet has a ring too! I forgot what was the name but I know there's one more planet that has ring. What was that name of that planet again, Mrs. Reed? I think the planet is Venus. But I'm not sure. Imagine that. All the time those rings has been around Venus for many, many thousands of years and no one noticed it until 1979 . . .

Teacher: We need a new reference book on astronomy so we can see which planets have the rings and the moons. All of our old books don't have all of the new information, do they?[5]

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[5]Reprinted, with permission, from Staton, 1989.

In each of the discussions above, the teacher has discovered what the student knows, and has expanded on and advanced the student's thinking about the topic by offering new information and reactions.

When the teacher asks questions along with making comments, students are pushed to think further about what they have written, as in the following two examples from Sonia, a sixth grader from Mexico, and Jung An, a sixth grader from Korea.

Sonia: We also saw a bunch of bats. They were very ugly. We swam in the Virgin River but it was rushing to much. When we came back we saw a yellow line dividing the sky in half. We saw blue sky and yellow sky.

Teacher: The yellow sky was over the city, wasn't it? What does that tell you about the air?

I've never been in the Virgin River. Is it large? Did you swim in the Colorado River? I did—and do you know what happens when you swim in that river?

Sonia: Yes, the yellow was over the sky. The yellow stuff tells me that people smog up the air. The Virgin River is relly big. In some places its muddy but were we were camping it was clear. It was like a rushing river. I didn't go swimming in the Colorado River. What happens if you swim in the Colorado River?

Teacher: When you swim in the Colorado River you have to take a shower afterward because your body is covered with silt. (Silt is fine pieces of dirt!) It is really strange because the silt is red colored . . .

* * * * * *

Jung An: A poem
Eagles are graceful birds
They attack lamb out of herds
They protect their young with their lives
As well as mate for lives
when attacked it
will fight back
I just love eagles

Teacher: Your poem shows a lot of knowledge about eagles! Have you ever marveled at their ability to soar and climb?

Jung An: Yes but unlike falcons eagles has muscles for climbing and soaring instead of flapping.

The various levels of writing illustrated in this section obviously do not represent a full range of student abilities. Interactions with adults, for example, both in and out of the university, would look much different (cf. Jones, 1988; Peyton, 1990a, for examples of adult ESL students' dialogue journal writing). But this discussion of writing with students from very beginning to more advanced levels should illustrate that the journal interaction can take whatever form it needs to take, depending on the goals of the teachers and the needs and interests of the students involved.

# CHAPTER 5

# GETTING STARTED

I start establishing the journal routine with my students immediately.

*Leslee Reed, 1988, p. 57*

Getting started with dialogue journals is quite simple, but before starting, it is a good idea to think about a few management issues such as:

- what students will write in;
- with which students you will write;
- how often the students will write and how often you will respond;
- when the writing will take place;
- how much the students will write;
- and how you will introduce the idea of dialogue journals.

Each of these issues is discussed in turn, focusing on students who are already literate, have had experience with reading and writing, and are working independently. Some ways for getting started with young children or other beginning writers are outlined in Chapter 4.

## What to Write in

Each student should have a bound, portable notebook, used only for this purpose, rather than sheets of looseleaf paper passed back and forth. (As discussed earlier, computer disks or electronic mail message systems can be used instead of notebooks.) The notebook allows an ongoing dialogue that is kept in one place and can be referred to at any time during the year. Students can either choose their own notebooks or they can all be given the same kind of notebook by the

teacher. In either case, the notebooks should be large enough to allow extended exchanges, yet small enough to be easily carried by the teacher. The advantage of having the same notebook for everyone is simply that it makes the stack of journals easier for the teacher to manage and transport. Some teachers prefer spiral bound notebooks, although some complain that they get tangled easily and students are more likely to tear out pages for other purposes; others like composition books; some even use blue exam books; some have students make their own notebooks and design the covers. With young writers, notebooks with primary lines can be purchased or made. An advantage of having blank covers, either on self-made or purchased notebooks, is that students can decorate them. Students may fill several notebooks during the school year.

A place should be established where the notebooks (if used) will be left after students have written in them and picked up by the students after the teacher has written.

### With Whom to Write

Most teachers who enjoy dialogue journals would like to use this practice with all of their students. Although time constraints and large numbers of students may make this impossible, there are different ways that the journals can be managed. If a teacher has several classes each day, one or two can be chosen to keep dialogue journals. Another option is to have classes write on alternate days, to stagger the teacher's responding time. Another might be to give some students a choice about writing. In short, it is not necessary to keep dialogue journals with all students at all times.

### How Often to Write

The frequency of the writing depends on how often the class meets, how many students the teacher is writing with, the course objectives, how much class time is devoted to the students' writing, and how much time the teacher is able to spend writing in the journals. The writing needs to occur regularly and continually. A daily exchange of the journal is ideal for creating a true sense of dialogue and maintaining a continual interchange of ideas. But many teachers find that, for various reasons, they cannot or do not want to maintain this schedule. Most agree that two or three times a week is necessary to maintain the dialogue and that the teacher should write regularly, if not each time the students write. If too much time elapses between entries the writing tends to lose its interactive quality, and it becomes more like a letter or even a series of short compositions.

Whatever schedule is decided on, it needs to be maintained so that the writing becomes almost a routine. Most teachers have said that they believe one reason their use of dialogue journals has been successful is that students understand the schedule and so can anticipate when they will be writing and when they will receive a reply.

### When to Write

Most teachers give their students time to write during school hours. In self-contained classes where students spend considerable time during the day, they may be given some time when they first arrive to read the teacher's entry and begin to write their own, and then keep their journals with them to write when they have time during the day or when they think of something to say. In classes where considerable free time is given for individual student reading and writing, the students may decide where the dialogue journal will fit into their other writing activities.

When students spend limited time each day in the class (such as an hour-long class period), dialogue journal time can be scheduled at the beginning of class as a warm-up or at the end as a wind-down. If the class session includes a break, scheduling the writing before the break allows those students who desire extra time to write to do so during the break.

Teachers usually respond outside of class time. But if students are in the classroom for the entire day and have free reading/writing time, the teacher may spend that time responding to journals as they are completed. This gives students the chance to view the teacher as a writer too.

### How Much to Write

It may be desirable to set a minimum amount that students must write each time (three lines or sentences, for example), at least in the beginning. Beyond that, the amount of writing done should be left to the individual student. Students should understand that long, polished pieces are not required. Most teachers roughly match their students' writing for length.

### Introducing the Idea

It is a good idea to begin using dialogue journals as early in the year as possible, so they quickly become part of the regular classroom routine. If students already know some English, the journals can be started right away. If they are beginning English learners who are

expected to write in English, it is best to wait about a month until they have acquired some minimal English vocabulary.

When introducing the idea, the teacher can explain to students that they will be having a continuing, private conversation in writing. It is important to stress that dialogue journals provide a way to communicate with each other rather than presenting them as a way to learn language or writing. In the journals, the students can write about whatever they want unless there is a specified focus for the writing, such as course content. (See the discussion in Chapter 2.) They can get information or give their opinions about class activities and assignments, write about their interests, problems, or concerns, ask for help or more information, even complain about things that are bothering them. They will not receive a grade, and their writing will not be corrected. Instead, they will receive a regular response from the teacher. Some teachers hand out a sheet of paper on which they explain the idea, give some general guidelines, and suggest possible directions the dialogue might take.

Most teachers have found that journal writing is most productive when it becomes routine, in the positive sense—students know when they will be writing and when they will receive a reply, so they are mentally prepared for both and expect both to be a regular part of their schedule. It is within the context of a regularly occurring, predictable activity that students seem to become comfortable with their writing and open up and express themselves in writing the most freely.

CHAPTER 6

# KEEPING IT GOING: STRATEGIES FOR MAINTAINING THE DIALOGUE

> . . . the dream of liberating education is for equality and against hierarchy . . . for an egalitarian classroom and against authoritarian relations in the classroom; for dialogue among peer students and with the teacher and against the monologue of the talking teacher who lectures students into silence and boredom.
>
> *Ira Shor, 1986, p. 5.*

> I think that the teacher's response should be as prompt as possible and something that's interesting. I've seen teachers' responses that just restate what the child has said, but do not add anything that's interesting for them to read. I think that instead, we need to always have some new, interesting information in our response.
>
> *Kelly Miller, 4th–6th grade ESL teacher*

The most important thing to remember about the dialogue journal is that it is a wonderful opportunity to *have* an actual dialogue. It provides an alternative to much classroom oral interaction in which the teacher asks questions for the student to answer. It is also an alternative to writing assignments in which the student produces a written text and the teacher responds with brief, evaluative comments. The value of a journal is in the open and mutual exchange of ideas. The teacher has the chance to go beyond "being the teacher" and to share experiences, thoughts, and feelings.

## Keeping the Conversation Going

Just as in oral, face-to-face conversation, creating a stimulating, ongoing dialogue can take time as participants seek to discover what

interests they have in common. Communication may seem somewhat awkward or difficult until the teacher and students get to know each other and become involved in mutually interesting topics. When students have been conditioned in school to answer questions and contribute little more to a discussion, it may be even more difficult. However, when teachers are simply responsive to what students have written, affirm them, and express interest in them as individuals and in what they are doing, communication begins to occur. Below are interactions from the first day of school between Leslee Reed and two of her sixth grade students learning English. Her responses make it clear that she respects and is interested in them and wants to know more about them.

Gloria: Today I was glad that I bring my lunch. Because I don't like the school turkey. Today I like geography because I like to look at maps to find direction of place.

Teacher: Yes! You were smart to have brought your lunch. That way you don't have to stand in line for 20 minutes.

Maps are fun. Did you like doing the map of our room? Was it hard?

I do hope you weren't hurt during our game time today!

* * * * * *

Antonio: 1. I am really interested in the book I have because I like baseball and now I know more about it.
2. In Geography we learned about land shapes.
3. We had a game for P.E.

Teacher: Terrific! I could see, Antonio, that you like baseball. Are the Dodgers your favorite team?

You seem interested in all of our lessons. It is great to have you in Room 11—you're a good student.

One way to generate a good discussion is to make contributions rather than to simply ask questions. Relating an experience, or telling about something you have been thinking about that is similar to an experience or thought the student has just told you about, often sparks student interest (only you can decide how personal you want to become when talking about yourself). Most experienced dialogue journal teachers agree that when they simply ask a lot of questions (a pattern that teachers are very comfortable with in the classroom and sometimes initially carry over to their journal writing), the interaction quickly becomes teacher-generated. The teacher defines the topics for

discussion and the student's responses become brief answers to the questions, with little or no further information (cf. Hall & Duffy, 1987; Peyton & Seyoum, 1989, for discussion). Of course it is permissible to ask some questions, for they can help to sustain and encourage the written conversation. But giving information and stating an opinion along with asking a question gives students more to work with. In the two dialogue journal conversations that open this handbook, Mrs. Reed asks very few questions. When she does, they are usually embedded in other text. When the interaction patterns in her dialogue journals with her class of sixth graders learning English were analyzed (Peyton & Seyoum, 1989), it was found that she simply asked questions, without providing any other information, only around 10% of the time. Most of the time that she asked questions, she made contributions of her own as well (around 30% of the time). The majority of her writing (around 60% of the time) consisted of statements—information, opinions, observations. Rather than simply eliciting student writing, she was participating as a fellow writer herself.

As mentioned earlier, the writing should be adapted to the interests and language ability of individual students, as is done in oral conversation. The first-day responses to Gloria and Antonio above are as different as Gloria's and Antonio's entries. In Chapter 3 we showed how the language used with different students varied depending on the students' level of English proficiency as manifested in their writing. This individualization is not something that needs to be carefully worked on, but often comes naturally as teachers attempt to make themselves understood and to promote the writing of their students.

The most important overall strategy for the teacher is to enter into the journal interaction as a good conversationalist and an interesting writer, expect the students to do the same, and relax and enjoy the writing. Reading and writing in dialogue journals can be the best part of the day, a time to find out about those people you're spending the semester or year with and reflect with them on issues that are important to both of you.

Beyond maintaining a good conversation, a number of other issues inevitably come up once teachers have established a regular routine of dialogue journal writing:

- how to fit writing to individual students into an already busy schedule;
- whether and how to correct the students' writing;
- how to help students who can't think of things to write about;
- how to keep the writing from becoming too personal;
- and how to maintain students' privacy.

## Finding Time for the Dialogue

There is no way around it; it takes time to read and respond thoughtfully to students' entries, especially when classes are large. The time factor is important because most teachers are busy already. Teachers who have experienced success with dialogue journals over extended periods of time have found ways to make the activity manageable. (See suggestions in "With whom to write" in Chapter 5). The key is to find a management pattern that suits the individual teacher's goals, personality, and situation.

Many teachers have reported that rather than being a burden, the time spent writing in journals is time well used. They gain valuable knowledge about students' interests and problems, receive feedback about the day's activities and lessons which can serve as the basis for future planning, and even find themselves refreshed by the dialogue. Nancie Atwell, for example, writes,

> I love to read and respond to their [students'] letters. It never seems a chore. I never know what I'll find when I turn to the last letter. I remember suffering through piles of junior high book reports, the dullest writing I've ever read. By contrast, kids' letters are a constant source of pleasure, surprise, and stimulation. And what they replaced—book reports, work sheets, quizzes, and tests—ate up more of my time than keeping up with my seventy-five correspondents ever will (1987, p. 194).

Leslee Reed describes her experience this way:

> Some people ask whether . . . writing in 26 journals is very tiring. I suppose, like everyone else, teaching exhausts me, but when I sit down to do my journals, I get rejuvenated. I get greatly amused at some of the comments the children make. Sometimes their advice to me is hilarious. Their feedback is so good for me and I really look forward to it. I can be just dog tired and think, "Well, I've got to get back to my journals," and the first thing I know, I'm so involved that I'm no longer weary. It's a good way for me to go (1988, p. 71).

Those teachers who find the writing worthwhile for them and their students have decided to continue with dialogue journals, regardless of the time it takes.

> If I thought that this was a chore, I wouldn't do it. You have to be able to convey to the students that this is something that is enjoyable, that you enjoy doing it and they will enjoy it too, so they will dive in.
>
> Dawn Center, 1st and 2nd grade ESL teacher

> There is no question that this procedure, of reading and replying to each entry daily, is time-consuming. Is it worthwhile, however, in terms of accomplishing the goals I and my students have? Yes, yes, a thousand times yes.
>
> Harriet Hulings, 9th–12th grade ESL teacher[6]

## Correcting the Writing

One of the central tenets of dialogue journal writing has been that students' writing should not be overtly corrected. The teacher may model some of the words and structures used incorrectly by the student, but the teacher's contribution to the journal is a genuine message, a response to the content rather than a comment on the form of the student's writing. However, some students are concerned about the correctness of their writing and want correction in the journal. This seems to be especially true of older students. Paul Jones (1988) found in a study of adult ESL students that almost all of the beginning students and half of the advanced students wanted their errors corrected. One expressed the following view:

> I want to be corrected. I don't think I'll learn anything like this. Of course I make mistakes, and if I don't get corrected I'll make mistakes again and again. I don't write anything I think is wrong. When I write I think it's right, but maybe it's not. That's why I want it to be corrected.

It is important to discuss this desire with students so they don't experience continued frustration if error correction is a concern for them. The goals of the journal writing and the reasons for not correcting errors within the dialogue need to be made very clear. Teachers might also find ways to address errors without disturbing the flow of the dialogue. They might, for example, tell students that if they mark in their entry a particular word or structure they are unsure about, the teacher will attempt to use that word or structure in the response. Parts of students' entries might be copied, discussed, and corrected in individual student-teacher conferences, or errors that occur in many students' writing might be discussed with the whole class. Jones (1988) discusses use by some teachers of a "grammatical P.S." At the end of a response, the teacher adds a gentle P.S. on one or two specific points: "By the way, in English we usually say . . . ." A teacher in Japan reserves a part of the blackboard for dialogue journal "hints," which are changed every few days. Many of the hints concern possible things to write about, but some focus on formal aspects of writing.

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[6]From a paper written for a graduate course in ESL.

For example, "When you write the speech of the teacher or your friends, are you putting quotation marks? If you do, the meaning will be clearer and it will be easier to read" (Kitagawa & Kitagawa, 1987, p. 64).

Students need other opportunities—revised and edited essays, for example—to receive feedback on the correctness of their writing. If they are confident they will receive such feedback elsewhere, they might not feel the need for it in their journals.

## Finding Topics to Write About

Many teachers have wondered whether they should assign topics for writing. As discussed earlier, in some instances the teacher might want the writing to focus on topics or issues related to the content of the class; for example, reflections on readings and authors in a literature class, or exploration of new insights in a science, math, history, or social studies class. However, beyond the overall instruction to "write about what you are learning in this class," most teachers have found that it is best to let the dialogue remain open-ended and flexible. In fact, they find that students often intersperse comments about personal issues and concerns with discussions of course content without losing sight of the goal of the journals, and that this freedom enhances the quality of the discussion. (Samway, 1989, found through trial and error that blocking the expression of personal issues can seriously stifle the dialogue.) A set of topics outlined ahead of time risks turning the journal into simply another writing assignment and could block the slow evolution of topics that can occur in a good discussion.

Sometimes, especially early in the year or semester, students don't know what to write about. Together, the class can brainstorm possible topics or entries and even come up with some entries that can be copied by those who don't know what to write. One year, Mrs. Reed's sixth grade students collaboratively produced this sample entry for the first day of writing, which fit her minimum three-sentence requirement.

> It is the first day of school in Room 11. I'm in the sixth grade and my teacher is Mrs. Reed. Today was a hot and humid day.

Of her 26 students, only three simply copied the three sentences and wrote nothing else. Others used parts of it and added their own ideas, and others created their entire entry themselves, ignoring the sample. But it gave a start to those who needed it. The important thing is that everyone had something to write and felt comfortable with it.

The journal writing "hints" in the corner of the Japanese teacher's blackboard, mentioned earlier, are sometimes designed to help students find something to write about. The hints might suggest possible topics, ask questions about an activity the students are engaged in, ask students to analyze classroom behavior, or include sample entries from former students (Kitagawa & Kitagawa, 1987, p. 64).

### Keeping the Writing from Becoming Too Personal

Some teachers are afraid that leaving the choice of topics entirely open to students encourages them to write about very personal topics or family affairs that the teacher is not prepared to deal with, and that the writing can turn into a counseling session. This does occur at times. However, it need not continue. Teachers can gently point out that they are not comfortable discussing that topic and introduce another one. One elementary teacher tells her students at the beginning of the year that the intention of the journal is not to share secrets or to delve into her or the students' private lives. It is for discussing things they are doing at home, at school, with friends, and things they are thinking about that aren't secrets.

At the same time, knowledge about personal issues may be valuable to the teacher and can be handled effectively in the journal. For example, one of Mrs. Reed's sixth grade students told her about a couple of other girls who were planning to run away. Without breaking the writer's confidence, Mrs. Reed was able to offer to help.

Elizabeth: What would you do if someone you knew was running away. They had the money to go to San Francisco or San Diego. They had about $1,000. You had already tried to convince them to stay but they still were going to. Would you tell their parents? What would you do?

Teacher: That is a serious problem. Have you discussed it with your Mother? If she knows the people involved she may have an idea. If it is someone here at school, someone your Mother doesn't know well, you would be wise to tell Mrs. F_____. Running away is an extremely dangerous thing to do. I hope you see that they get help.

Elizabeth: The only thing is, I don't want her to hate me afterward. Actually its 2 girls that are running away. Yesterday she stayed after school and I tryed to talk her out of it. She kept on saying "My parents ruined my life."

Teacher: I am very concerned about the girls' running away. If you still feel they are about to do that kind of thing, would you want me to ask Mrs. F to speak to them? I do feel we *must* do something if they are determined to take this kind of action.

Elizabeth: It's Ellen that's running away. Has Dena already told you? What are you going to do?

Teacher: Yes, I know who it is and am pleased because I really think I may be able to help. I won't ever tell what I know or who told me. I will begin at once to see what I can do.

If the problem is beyond the teacher's expertise, it is wise to refer the student to another source of help—a counselor or parent.

The personal quality of the writing is really up to the teacher, who must decide what the goal is for the writing and what level of sharing feels comfortable.

## Maintaining Privacy

Most teachers and students agree that the journal communication is a private dialogue, to be shared with other teachers, students, or parents only at the discretion of the student. Students should be assured of the privacy of their writing from the beginning, but advised that if they should write in the journal about a danger to themselves or another student, or about something that requires intervention, someone will need to be informed. In such a case it is best to discuss the situation with the student first if possible, so as not to lose trust or betray a confidence.

It may be that others—other students, other teachers, a parent, or an administrator—want to read a particular student's journal. Some students want to share their writing with others and should be free to choose to do so. But the reading of a student's journal should never be allowed without that student's permission. This can be avoided by not leaving journals unattended on desks or shelves and by keeping them locked up when not in students' possession.

Teachers need to make it a policy not to discuss students' journal entries in the teachers' lounge or in teachers' meetings. If the journals are used for research purposes or if samples are pulled for presentation to others, student permission (as well as parent permission, when appropriate) must be obtained and anonymity assured. (As it turned out, many of the students whose writing is shown in this handbook wanted their real names used.)

CHAPTER 7

# WHAT TO DO IF . . . : STRATEGIES FOR HANDLING PROBLEMS

> This work is not unlike making stone walls, by piling one rock on another, but the more steady, detailed, and continuous that piling is, the more certain is the strength, and the less likely to tumble down.
>
> *Japanese educator, quoted in Kitagawa and Kitagawa, 1987, p. 63*

In this chapter some strategies are suggested for handling commonly occurring problems, from working with the student who is reluctant to write, to understanding and responding to the student whose entries are indecipherable. Ways of handling specific situations cannot, of course, be prescribed or decided upon ahead of time, because they are integrally tied to particular situations or students, or even the time of year. These suggestions are therefore very general and can be adapted as appropriate.

## Writing with the Reluctant Writer

Not all students are enthusiastic about dialogue journal writing. Some may fulfill the requirements to write, but make their reluctance to communicate obvious by writing the absolute minimum amount possible, writing nearly the same thing every day, and ignoring what the teacher writes. Raoul, a sixth grader from Mexico, was one such student in Leslee Reed's class. All of his entries in October, November, and December were very similar, much like those shown below.

*October*

Raoul: I hope we have a nice day today Mrs. reed and I hope we have P.E. and I hope we have a nice ricese and a nice lunch time and a good playtime.

*November*

Raoul: I wish we hav. a good day and I hope we have a good lunch time today and recess time I hope theres no trouble today.

Teacher: You were angry with me this morning. You are not at school to play—even art is a way to learn. We measured and used a ruler to help us learn.

Raoul: I hope we have a good time today and a good recess a good lunch time and a good playtime. I hope we wont get in any trouble.

Teacher: I am sorry you wrote this and did not keep your journal with you. You could help me so much if you would tell me in your journal why you are having trouble. I would like to make school easier for you by helping to solve some problems.

Raoul: I hope we have a nice day today and a good recess time and a good lunch time . . .

Writing with Raoul was an extremely frustrating experience. He continued to write nearly the same thing each day for almost the entire year, glossing over the real problems he was having in class and making it clear that he was not interested in communicating. Mrs. Reed wrote back each day, trying to vary her response, affirm him, and find something that might interest him. She also tried to address problems he was having and offer help. Primarily, she tried to keep the channel of communication open, in case Raoul ever did decide he wanted to communicate.

Finally, very late in the year, some difficult events occurred, and the written interaction offered a way for Raoul to handle them. For example, when the class was planning to go to the local Junior High for an orientation trip, Raoul never returned his permission slip allowing him to go. When Mrs. Reed asked him about it, he explained his predicament in the journal, and they worked out a solution together.

Raoul: . . . and you know why I don't want to go to Virgil because I had three girl friends there and they thought I was going to King J.H. and if they see me they are going to be very mad. I hope I don't have to go with you.

Teacher: No! I did not know that you had told anyone that you were in Junior High. I'm glad you told me. I understand the problem. If they saw you with the 6th graders they

would know you had been giving them a line! I will see what I can arrange.

Raoul: Thanks a lot I really apprisiated. If I don't go were am I staying will you tell me please. . . I hope you guys have a good time at Virgil thats to bad I can't go.

This event and the discussion around it initiated a genuine interaction that continued for the rest of the year. Raoul still had days when he returned to his repetitive writing about recess and lunch, but he also wrote about real events in his life, making it possible for genuine discussions to occur, and in some cases, for potential problems to be averted ahead of time. By the end of the year, he and Mrs. Reed had developed a genuine friendship.

Kitagawa and Kitagawa (1987, pp. 62–64) describe a teacher in Japan (Kamemura) who requires not that children write, but that they turn in their journals on a schedule whether or not they have written anything. Kamemura writes to each child anyway, and has found that "few children can resist writing at least a line or two after reading about three of these messages" (p. 63). Kamemura admits that it is sometimes difficult to write to a child who is not writing, but explains that he writes about important aspects of the child's life, things he might say anyway if he and the child talked. His challenge is to think of some area of the child's experience in which they have something in common and in which the child is interested.

Even Kamemura has children "who are so thick-skinned as to resist writing while enjoying his comments anyway" (p. 63). With those children he uses the journal as an opportunity for giving guidance, and finds that they are always eager to read what he has written even if they don't write.

Raoul's story had a happy ending and Kamemura has worked out an approach to journal writing that seems to fulfill his and his students' needs. But some students may never come to enjoy the journal. That is their choice. Just as dialogue journals are not enjoyed by all teachers, they are not enjoyed by all students.

### Writing with the Repetitive Writer

The early writing of many ESL students can be very repetitive, because they repeatedly use in their journals language patterns and routines they have learned and feel comfortable with in speech. For example, many low-proficiency students write endless variations on an "I like" pattern, as did Ruqayya, a fourth grader from Pakistan, and José, a sixth grader from El Salvador.

Ruqayya: I like to fly.
I like school.
I like to play.
I don't lik fish.
I like this day.

* * * * * *

José: do you like Halloween. I like Halloween are you watching Mr T I like Mr. T do you like Mr. T

Patterns like these can become a very comfortable, safe way for a beginning writer to get something in print. Students sometimes seem to reach a level of certainty with parts of the language that they know and do not progress further. However, the patterns can become a crutch that is difficult to drop, but must be dropped so the writer can move into more creative language use.

The teacher can use various strategies to help students move out of using such fixed language patterns. He or she can vary, build on, or extend the pattern the student used, by adding details to it, by changing the order of the patterns, or by introducing new patterns related to new topics. For example, when the student writes something like "I like the game," the teacher might add a detail about the game and an additional comment: "I can see you like the handball game. You were playing so hard!" Time or location could be added: "Yes, you liked the game we played at recess" or "You liked the game we played with the other class." Revising the structure of the statement can help to change the pattern while using the same, familiar vocabulary: "We played a lot of games. It looked like you liked the handball game the best." The teacher can also ask a question to encourage the student to elaborate: "Those *were* great games. Which ones did you like best?"

With more advanced students, the teacher may simply want to respond briefly to the student's topic and then introduce other topics, thus modeling variation and creativity.

Students can also be encouraged to write about texts they are reading, which often become valuable resources of new words or structures.

It is possible that students who continue writing fixed language patterns and routines are not reading the teacher's entries, and they may need to be encouraged to do so. By varying their own writing, teachers can give students a daily model of what can be done in writing, but the students must read the teacher's entry to benefit.

### Writing with the Student Who Has "Nothing to Write About"

Once students become accustomed to writing regularly to a known audience, they learn to choose aspects of their own lives, their read-

ings, topics they are studying in school, or societal issues that are worth writing about. However, there will inevitably be days when topics for discussion are exhausted, nothing major is happening, and students can't think of anything to write about. On these days they may simply need to write the minimum, maybe a diary-like review of their day, and wait for a more productive and interesting day. But there are some ways to help the blocked writer. Sometimes just talking briefly with the teacher about what they've been doing, books they've been reading, or things they've been thinking about can spark ideas. Students can also be reminded that rereading the teacher's last entry may give them ideas. Are there any things in the teacher's entry that are worth writing more about? Are there any questions that need to be answered or any questions the students might want to ask about that entry? The teacher's writing can be an important model of topics that are worth writing about and of ways of writing that are interesting, lively, and varied, and it is helpful if students come to recognize it as a resource.

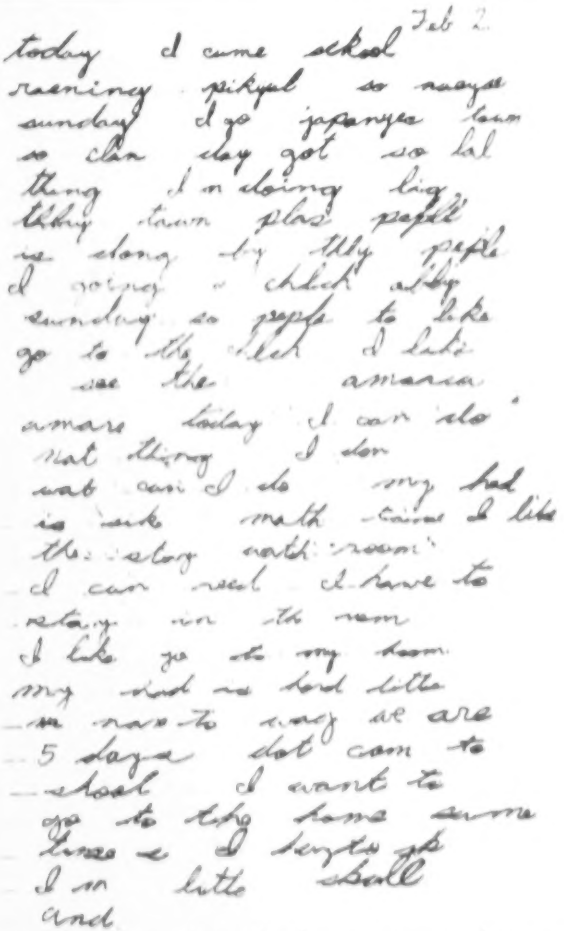
With all three kinds of students discussed above—the reluctant, repetitive, and blocked writer—a great deal of patience may be required, for it may take a long time before they respond to the dialogue journal idea and begin to write substantive, interesting entries. Some may never get to that point. With some students, especially those who are having problems in other areas of school as well, the fact that they are writing anything in their dialogue journal may be a victory.

### Responding to Entries That Are Difficult to Decipher

The entries of some students at the beginning stages of learning English may be so difficult to read, because of handwriting and spelling, that the teacher has little idea of what they have written. To address this problem very beginning writers might read the entry aloud to the teacher or an aide (described in the section in Chapter 4 on "Beginning writers"). But when students become more independent, such oral explanations usually do not take place during class, and the teacher is left to decipher the entry without help. The writing of Su Kyong, a sixth grader from Korea, shown in Figure 13, is an example of such an entry. It appears she is reporting that she came to school, telling about a trip to Japanese Town and about her math class, and saying that her head hurts ("my had is hord little"). The teacher works with what she can read, along with her knowledge about Su Kyong (she knows that she missed a day of school because of a headache), to compose her response:

> I am glad you are back. I missed you so much. I like to go to Japanese Town, too. Did you eat there? I hope your head does not hurt. I miss you. At noon

*Figure 13*



today I cume sckool raening pikyul so naeyse sunday I go japanyes town so clan day got so lal thing Im doing big thlay town plas pepll is dong by thly peple I going chlch ably sunday so peple to like to to the chlch I like see the amarca amare today I can do not thing I don wat can I do my had is sik math time I like the story wath room I can reed I have to stay in the rom I like go to my room. My had is hord litle nax to wag we are 5 days dot come to shool I want to go to the home some sume time s I hayto sk Im litle skull and

> I had a meeting and I could not let boys and girls come in. You can come in on Tuesday noon.

If an entry is completely indecipherable, the teacher can simply write, "I didn't understand what you wrote today. Will you please explain it to me again?"

If students are attempting new structures that they have not yet mastered, their imperfect use of these structures may result in a message that is somewhat garbled and difficult to understand, as shown in an entry by Michael, a sixth grader from Burma, in Figure 14. Michael had been writing in English for five months and was now attempting to use more complex structures. A teacher who dismissed the entry as incomprehensible would miss the fact that Michael was making an important point and giving good reasons for his request. It is crucial that such clear thinking not be missed or diminished because of muddled structures. Before responding, the teacher might restate mentally, as closely as possible, what the student has written. This assures that it is understood, and that the response is appropriate and consistent with the student's level of thought. Michael's entry can be restated thus:

> . . . will you tell Mrs. P [Mrs. P is the reading specialist, who came once a week] not to come on Tuesday, because you have yard duty and a meeting after school. I want her to come on Monday instead, so she won't have to leave so soon, she can stay after school longer, and we can talk about the reading.

This is the teacher's response:

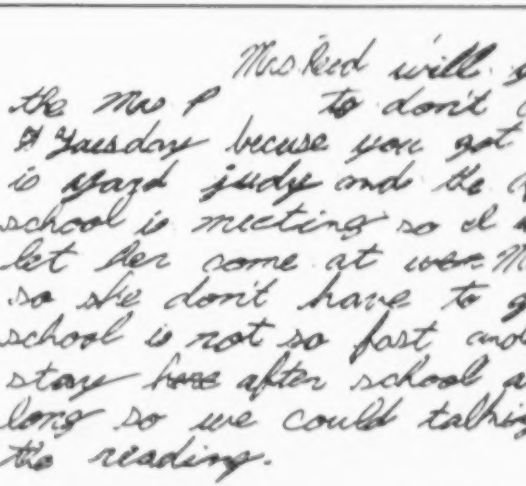
> . . . Yes, I will tell Mrs. P. You do have good ideas. May I show her what you wrote? I am sure she will be interested. We all like to talk about all of the books we are reading!

Whatever the causes of difficulty with reading students' journal entries, students are probably trying to express ideas that are important to them. Those ideas need to be respected, and teachers need to make every attempt to understand and respond.

### Addressing Behavior Problems

The journal is a good place to address problems that students are having in school, because the privacy of the writing allows discussion toward a solution without disruption of the entire class, and because both student and teacher have time to reflect on the problem as they

*Figure 14*


Mrs Reed will you tell the Mrs P to don't come at Tuesday becuse you got t. Tuesdo is yard judy and the after school is meting so I want to let her come at Monday so she don't have to go after school is not so fast and she can stay here after school at so long so we could talking about the reading.

. . . Mrs. Reed will you tell the Mrs. P to don't come at Tuesday because you got Tuesday is yard duty and the after school is meeting so I want to let her come at Monday so she don't have to go after school is not so fast and she can stay after school at so long so we could talking about the reading.

make their statements and argue their points. Some very valuable discussions of behavior problems can take place in the journal. For example, Jung An, a sixth grader from Korea, was an advanced, motivated student, but at one point in the year he stopped working hard and began getting low grades. His performance was often the topic of long discussions in his journal:

Jung An: Did you did as you promised me, did you start over my grade? I hope you did. Gosh you took me by the suprise about report card. boy am I nervous well have a nice day.

Teacher: I cannot re-do your grade unless you re-do your work. I can understand why you are nervous. You have done less than average work. I remember telling the class several times that the ocean report would be the main part of your mid-March report card.

Jung An: Yes I understand anyhow I really didn't did my best. I think I will have to explain my dad I didn't did my

best. Boy was I nervous when my dad came to the class. fortunately he came to get the key.

Teacher: You know you did not do your best so I'm sure the grade on your report was no surprise. I do hope that you will try a lot harder. You are a very bright boy who sometimes just doesn't want to pay attention.

Jung An: Mrs. Reed guess what I can't believe my eyes when my dad took it so naturally about my report card.

I know and now I will do my best because I have someone to compete.

Teacher: Your Dad is very smart! He knows what you do at home so he probably was not surprised, because he knows you were not listening at school.

I really hope you do try harder. Your fine brain is just resting and not working for you.

In discussions like these, teachers have the opportunity to describe situations as they see them, affirm students and their ability to do well, and offer a plan of action.

We saw earlier how Mrs. Reed and Raoul worked through an awkward situation, a field trip he did not want to take, without involving others in the class. Later in the year, Mrs. Reed was able to foresee and possibly prevent a problem at the school's graduation ceremonies:

Teacher: Are your parents going to come to your promotion?

Raoul: No my parents arent going to come. some of my home boys [fellow gang members] are going to come because you don't know what may happen.

Teacher: What do you mean by "you don't know what may happen"? We've been doing this for years and nothing happens! We all have a good time and you get your promotion after the ceremony. So if anything happens during the ceremony—you may not get your promotion. I'm glad your friends want to come—but they can cause you a problem, too.

Raoul: No they wont their already vets they have babies they wont start nothing. only if some one comes up to them. there just going to site down and watch.

Oral follow-up may be required in some situations, but in many, the problem can be taken care of entirely in the journal.

### Responding to Angry Entries

The dialogue journal is also a good place for students to vent their emotions, which may include anger. They don't usually do this until later in the year, after they have passed through the polite, superficial "I love math and I love you" stage of the interaction and have begun to express their true feelings. Again, the ability to pour out their emotions in the journal gives teacher and student the opportunity to discuss what is happening and what can be done about it without class disruptions. Benny, a sixth grader from Puerto Rico, was quick to express his negative reactions to whatever happened in class that displeased him. Here he expressed his anger about the advice Mrs. Reed had given him about his vulture for his social studies project.

Benny: I have not read any of the stuff you wrote because I hate reading what you write to me. I am nearly done with the thing on the vulture. I hate the vulture. I made it the way you told me. Now it looks like a bird with a striped skirt on. I don't like it any more. I used to like it when there was no dum feathers on it. Now it looks so dum. Did you known that the same day I bought a record my brother broke it.

Teacher: I wonder why you don't like what I write. I like what you write even if you are not in a good mood.

The head and neck of your vulture are particularly good. Why don't you look for a better picture of the feather placement? Have you found the size of the vulture?

Note that Benny ended his entry on a positive note. Mrs. Reed has found that once students have expressed their anger in the journal they no longer feel it so strongly, and she sees students busily erasing angry entries written earlier and writing new ones or adding something positive at the end, as Benny did. Mrs. Reed responded positively to Benny's outburst rather than "fighting back" and tried to offer suggestions for how he might improve his vulture, which had become a disappointment.

Major upheavals in students' lives, such as moving and attending another school, can lead to a sense of confusion and strong emotion, which sometimes is expressed as anger and even hatred:

Alex: . . . I wish I didn't move but my mom wants to move because my family is over there at m . I hope tomor-

row I have fun because its going to be my last day . . . . I hate you miss reed ranold didn't even stay in at recess. its a good thing Im leaving. I hope theres no teacher like you at M____ high school is ronald going to stay in for recess tomorrow because if he isn't he is going to get it.

Teacher: You were really angry. I'm glad you were willing to write it! That isn't a fun way to feel. How can we keep you from getting so upset? I'd be willing to help you plan a way.

I will miss you. I still wish you could stay here until school is out and then go to M____! Sometimes we can't do what we want to do.

Here it is obvious even from Alex's writing the conflicting feelings he is having. This pattern has been so consistent in Mrs. Reed's work with students of this age that she isn't thrown by the negative expression of feelings. Instead, she acknowledges and even identifies with them.

It must be pointed out that Mrs. Reed had been writing in dialogue journals with upper elementary school students for over 15 years when she wrote the entries to Benny and Alex shown here. During this time she tried, dropped, and improved on strategies for handling problems and began to see rather predictable patterns emerge (like the mixture of emotions during a time of personal change and upset) that could be handled in tried and true ways. An examination of her responses to angry students reveals that she tends to use the following strategies:

- Responds as directly and honestly to the situation as possible, without making accusations;
- Acknowledges the anger and the reasons for it;
- Affirms the student and her liking for him or her;
- Offers options for future action or offers to help in some way.

A teacher new to dialogue journal writing may despair of ever being able to respond in this way, and it may be that initial attempts are disappointing. However, with time and practice at listening to students and attempting to communicate with them in an authentic, constructive way, patterns will begin to become clear and successful strategies will emerge.

### Writing in the Student's Native Language

One issue that ESL teachers often mention is that students sometimes write in the dialogue journal in their native language. So far in

our experience, and that of other teachers, this has not been a problem. If teachers do not understand the student's language or have a classroom aide who does, they can let the student keep a personal journal in their native language until the student feels ready to write the dialogue in English. Teachers can explain that they don't understand the language and therefore, unfortunately, cannot write back.

However, if the teacher or an aide does understand the language and can write in it, the journal interaction can begin in that language, and the student can ease gradually into writing in English. There have been instances in which students produced very little writing in English, but when asked to write in their native language, wrote lengthy, interesting, and coherent pieces. The teachers were then able to build on their interest in writing and their ability to write and gradually move to writing in English (Carole Urzua, personal communication, April 1987). Students who started out writing in Spanish and made just such a transition to English without being asked to are described in Chapter 4 and in the student profiles in Chapter 8.

* * * * * *

Numerous other problems could be addressed, and individual teachers will have unique situations to work with. We have discussed here those problems that teachers have mentioned frequently, and have given some overall guidelines for addressing them and some illustrative examples of ways that Mrs. Reed has handled them in her writing with her students. We hope that these general guidelines and examples will be helpful in addressing these and other problems that may come up.

CHAPTER 8

# PROFILES OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENT WRITERS

> . . . each [student has] her or his own individual approach to the process of L2 learning, and this approach might change over time or in different situations. As teachers we accept each [student's] approach or style while we encourage all attempts to communicate.
>
> *Celia Genishi, 1989, p. 514*

Elsewhere in this handbook we have presented personal examples of writing from different students' journals to illustrate various points, but have not looked at the development of individual writers during the course of a school year. In this section we present profiles of the development over time of individual students, representing different ages and levels of English proficiency. The intent in presenting profiles in this manner is to give an indication of the types of writing, patterns of development, and kinds of changes that teachers might expect from their own students. We hope that they also demonstrate clearly some of the benefits of dialogue journal writing we have described. The profiles, all of nonnative English speakers, move from younger to older students and from those who are less proficient to those who are more proficient with written English.

## Catalina: Starting with Drawing

Many teachers working with adults and children have asked, "What if they don't yet know how to write? How can they keep a dialogue journal?" Any students, children or adults, can begin a dialogue journal as soon as they know some oral English and have some idea that marks on paper convey meaning. They do not need to have mastered the alphabet or the conventions of written English. These will develop

as they continue to write. They can begin by drawing a message that the teacher replies to, or dictating a message that the teacher writes and then replies to. Most students very quickly begin to write, often copying words from print materials in the classroom and gradually becoming more independent and producing longer and more varied messages. Catalina's work illustrates the development that is possible with students at this stage.

Catalina, whose journal writing is shown elsewhere in this handbook, was a first grader in Ruth Sedei's combined first and second grade class of nonnative English speakers. She was a native Spanish speaker from Colombia and had been in the United States only one year when school began. She spoke Spanish at home, had attended a Spanish-speaking preschool, and began the year with very little English.

Like the other students in her class, Catalina began writing in her dialogue journal after about a month of school. By that time she had learned school routines and some oral English, knew how to produce English letters, but had had very little experience with writing in English. Therefore, she started out by drawing and labeling pictures, as in the example in Figure 15a. Most of the time she asked for help with every word she wrote, or found and copied words from the print that was plentiful in the room or previous journal entries. The teacher wrote a reply, building on the picture or the labels.

Catalina eventually began to write simple sentences (Figure 15b) and even more complex messages (Figure 15c). This writing was always copied or done with a lot of help. For example, for the entry in Figure 15b she copied Monica's name from her desk and asked for help writing the rest of her message.

For over half of the year, until well into March, Catalina was reluctant to write anything without help. She was determined that her writing would be perfectly correct, and even though she was urged to attempt to write independently, her writing time was spent moving from resource to resource, from people to books and other print, looking for help. She had many human resources to choose from—the teacher, an aide, a researcher[7], and a best friend. As a result, her spelling was always correct, as she wanted it to be. When Mrs. Sedei, attempting to develop more independence in all of the children, decided they could ask for help with only one word a day (which they wrote in their self-made dictionaries), Catalina was quite upset and worked with her friend Monica, one of the most advanced children in the class and also a Spanish speaker, as much as she could.

---

[7]Joy Peyton did research for a year in this class.

*Figure 15a*

In March, after considerable prodding and encouragement from her parents and Mrs. Sedei, Catalina became convinced that she could write independently, and she began to sound out the words she wanted to write and experiment with spellings. In Figure 15d, for example, she copied "Friday" and "Today" from the class calendar and bulletin board, and wrote the rest herself.

This step away from standard English spelling was a positive one

*Figure 15b*

October 29

Monica and Luke milk

I drink milk for dinner.

I drink juice for breakfast.

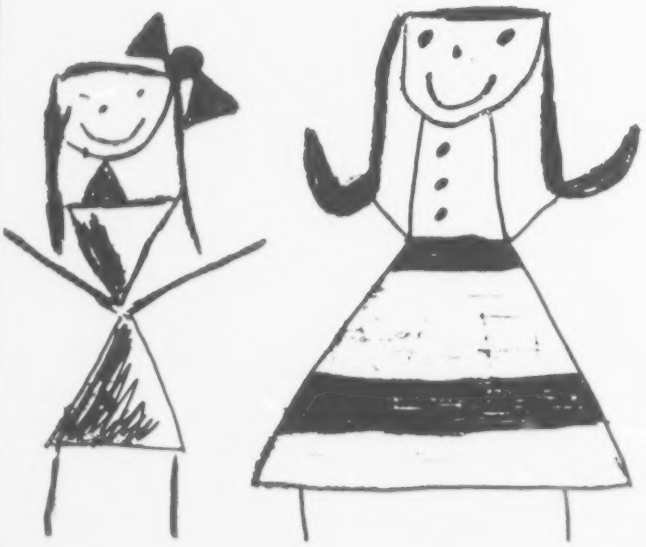


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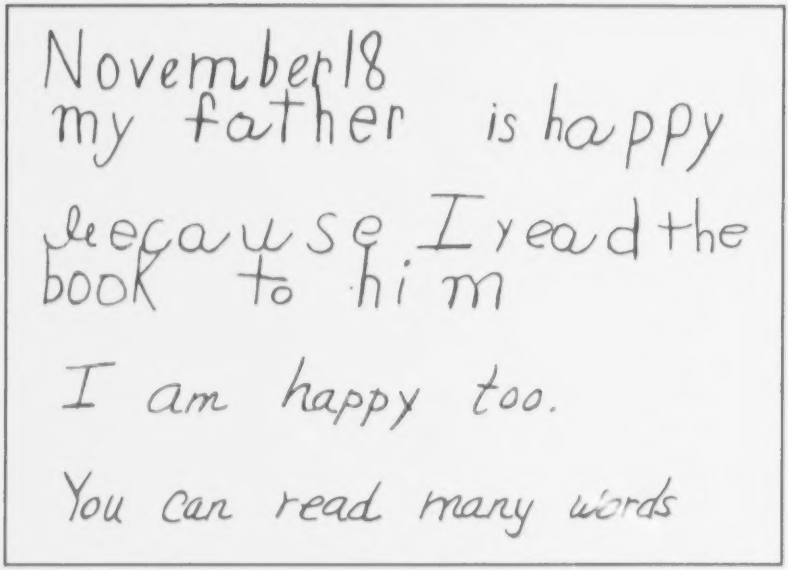
*Figure 15c*




for Catalina. Once she was willing to break away from the crutch of constant assistance and risk writing on her own, she was free to write about whatever she wanted to. She was no longer confined to short, perfect messages or words she could find in the room and her books. She began to write about the world beyond herself and the classroom (Figure 15e), about past events (Figure 15f), and future plans (Figure 15g), nearly always accompanying her written entry with an illustration. She also began to write more extended texts, including an explanation for her behavior (Figure 15h) and a narrative of an experience (Figure 15i).

Finally, near the end of the year, she began to show awareness of Mrs. Sedei as her reader. This is something that does not seem to happen until near the end of the first grade, if it happens then, at least in Mrs. Sedei's experience. Many of her first graders wrote self-contained entries in their dialogue journals all year, without acknowledging her writing to them. Catalina followed the same pattern until May, when she began to acknowledge Mrs. Sedei as a fellow writer—asking questions and answering them (Figure 15j–1 & 2), addressing her directly or referring to her, and sharing experiences (Figure 15k).

During the year, Catalina's journal writing developed remarkably in a number of ways. She moved from drawing and single words, to sentences copied from words in the room, to writing independently

*Figure 15d*

March 20
Friday I pie a psow
the psow is red
an Today I pie
a Crayons to

I didn't see your new red pencil. I did see your crayons. Now you can do good work.

March 20

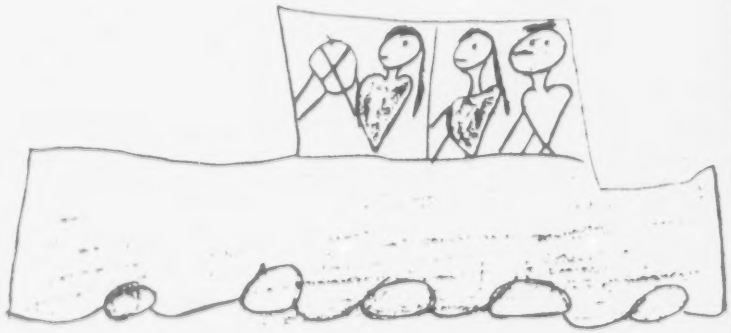
Friday I buy a pencil
The pencil is red.
And today I buy crayons too.

[Mrs. Sedei, who is accustomed to reading children's writing, provided these "translations."]

*Figure 15e*

April 3
Today mo car es
prken I am sad pboss
ma cOr dasant work

I hope your father got your broken car fixed. Something is wrong with my car too. It says, "Hm-m-m-m-m!"



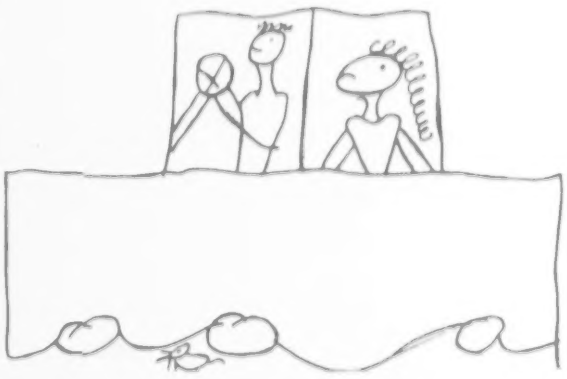
April 3
Today my car is broken. I am sad because my car doesn't work.

*Figure 15f*

March 24

thes mone I look at a car hit a cat the litte cat die

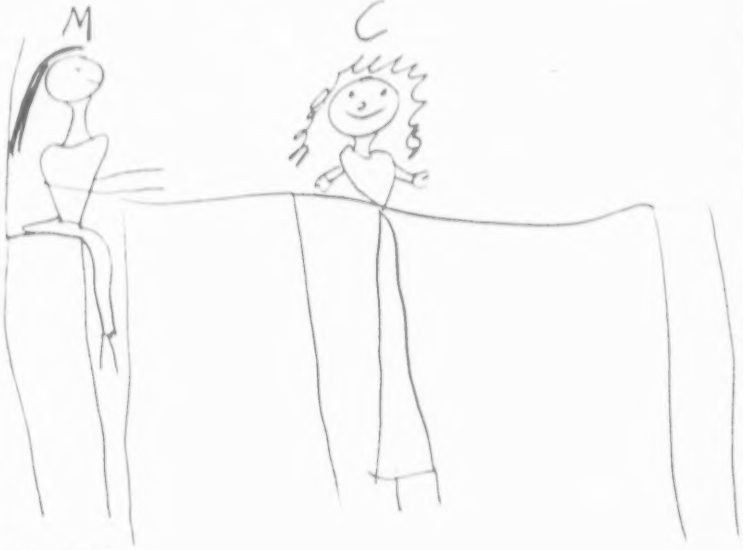
That is so sad. Did you cry when the car hit the cat? I know I would have cried— The poor little cat.



March 24
This morning I saw a car hit a cat. The little cat died.

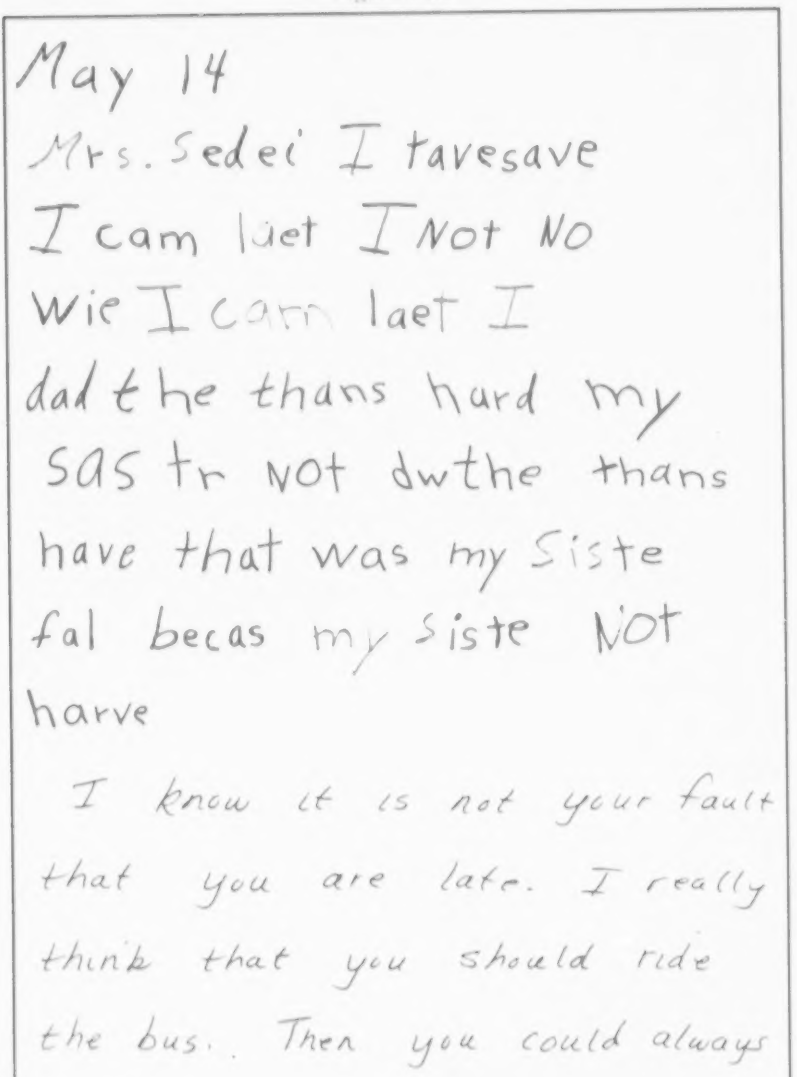
*Figure 15g*

March 25
Aftrnw na mother
es god to help min
Spelling List
Your mother is nice to help you study for your spelling test. You will do a good job.




March 25
This afternoon my mother is going to help me [my?] spelling list.

*Figure 15h*


May 14
Mrs. Sedei I tavesave
I cam laet I Not NO
wie I cam laet I
dad the thans hard my
sas tr Not dwthe thans
have that was my Siste
fal becas my Siste Not
harve

I know it is not your fault
that you are late. I really
think that you should ride
the bus. Then you could always

May 14
Mrs. Sedei, I am very sorry I came late. I don't know why I came late. I did the things [in a hurry?]. My sister did not do the things [in a hurry?]. That was my sister's fault, because my sister did not hurry.

*Figure 15i*

May 18

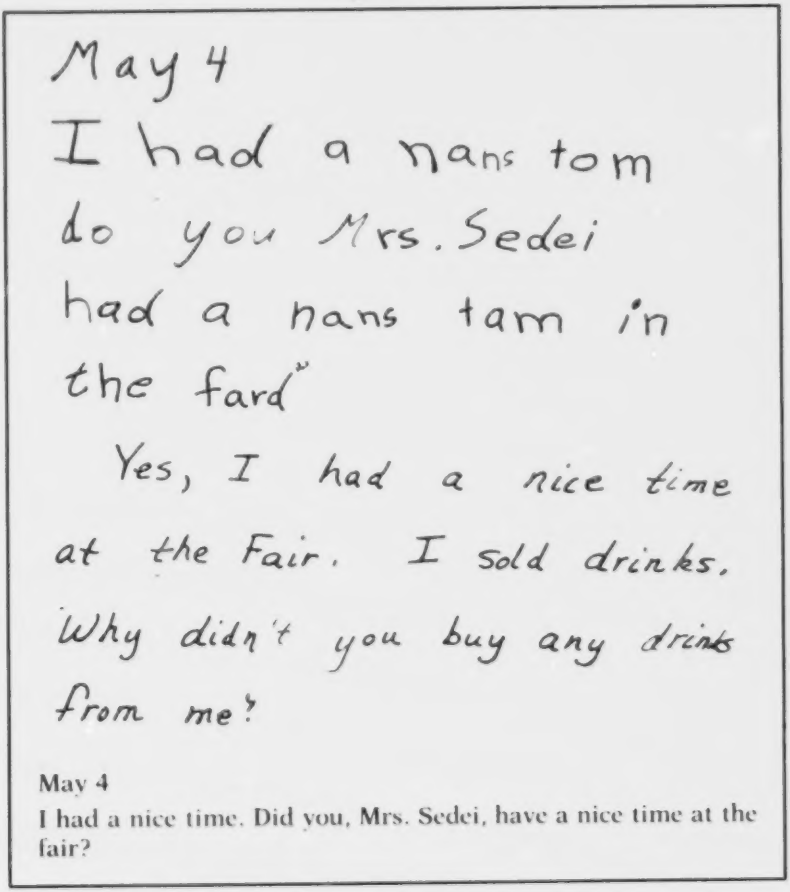
My mother fan had a bae in sunday the bae is a gir. Hr is pate. Hr was sleep and I caft hr a bed to sleep and Sanday the sam bae I see hr.

You gave the baby a carseat. All babies need to sit in a car seat. It makes the baby safe in the car.

What is the name of your friend's baby?

May 18
My mother's friend had a baby on Sunday. The baby is a girl. She is pretty. She was sleeping and I gave her a bed to sleep on and Sunday the same day I saw her.

*Figure 15j-1*

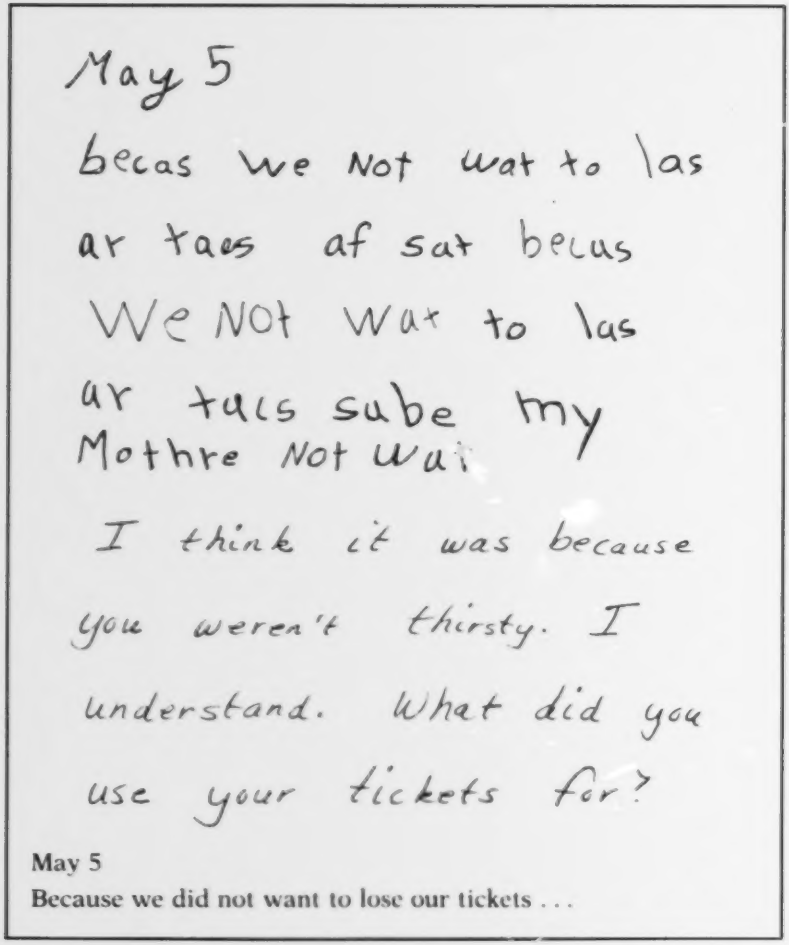

May 4
I had a nans tom
do you Mrs. Sedei
had a nans tam in
the fard"
Yes, I had a nice time
at the Fair. I sold drinks.
Why didn't you buy any drinks
from me?

May 4
I had a nice time. Did you, Mrs. Sedei, have a nice time at the fair?

with invented spelling; from one-proposition statements to a variety of types of extended texts, including narrations and explanations (her journal averaged 5 words per entry in October and November and 28 words per entry in May and June); from simple to more complex sentence structures; from a focus on the "here and now," herself and her own feelings and current activities, to a focus on past and future events in which others were involved; from simply writing to writing for a recognized audience; and from self-contained entries to continued conversations. She still needed to develop standard writing conventions, but that could come later.

As she saw herself develop, Catalina was delighted (along with

*Figure 15j-2*


May 5
becas we Not wat to las
ar taes af sat becas
We NOt wat to las
ar tais sube my
Mothre Not wat
I think it was because
you weren't thirsty. I
understand. What did you
use your tickets for?

May 5
Because we did not want to lose our tickets . . .

Mrs. Sedei) with her progress and her sense of independence, as they expressed in this exchange:

*April 10*

Catalina: I am hap bPeKas I bu ma wok pae mo saf an Mrs. Sedei to is hap
[I am happy because I do my work by myself and Mrs. Sedei is happy too.]

*Figure 15k*

beautiful too.

Are you going to go swimming tomorrow? I need a new bathing suit.

May22

Wal af tasan fat Ca me and I wal Ca my mother af you can cat a nw pdnsud I Wal cat youa has pednswt

Thank you for wanting to help me find a bathing suit that fits. If I don't find a bathing suit I can sit at the side of my pool and put my feet in the water.

Have a good weekend!

May 22

Well, if it doesn't fit, tell me and I will tell my mother if you can get a new bathing suit. I will get you a nice bathing suit.

Teacher: Catalina, I am so proud of you. I told you that you could do your work by yourself. Now you do. You are ready to be in second grade next year.

Catalina's development was, of course, not confined to her journal writing. By the end of the year she was keeping book and science journals, writing letters to other students and teachers, and creating imaginative stories. When Joy Peyton asked her in an interview whether she thought she had improved during the year, she said proudly that before she was scared to write and always asked for help with everything. But now she was a good writer, and when she didn't know how to write something she figured it out herself. She was ready for the second grade.

## Miguel: The Development of English Fluency

Miguel, a fifth grader in Kelly Miller's fourth through sixth grade ESL class, started school immediately after arriving from El Salvador, knowing no English. Miguel represents those students discussed earlier who need individualized instruction but often do not get it, because they are in classes with many other students who are functioning at a much more advanced level of English proficiency and have their own needs. The teacher and classroom aide (if the class is fortunate enough to have one) are already very busy and not able to spend a lot of time with one student.

Because Miguel was one of two new students who knew no English, in a class of 16 nonnative English speakers, he often looked scared, lost, and lonely, and remained very quiet. For the first several months he and the other new student, Mario, either worked separately with the classroom aide or worked together in workbooks designed by the county for beginning English learners. (The workbook exercises began with color- and shape-matching activities and moved to word- and sentence-copying, fill-in-the blanks, and pattern drills—"Is John a teacher?" The student answers, "No, he's not."; "Are you a teacher?" "No, I'm not."; etc.) When speaking with Miguel or Mario individually, Mrs. Miller and the aide often spoke Spanish. By the end of the year these students had become more integrated into the regular activities of the classroom and even joined reading and writing groups with other students, but Miguel talked in class only when asked a question.

Like the other students in his class, Miguel began writing in his journal on the first day of school. His first entry was written in very limited Spanish:

*September 2*

Miguel: tedo uno ermana i un ermado tedo a mi mami i a mi popi. yo cotodos. Eyos vi mi felis a mi casa i ti i mi tilla. lego to dos domigo.

Teacher: Tu tienes un hermano, una hermana, tu mamá y tu papá. Ustedes son muy felices en tu casa. Tu tío y tía llegaron los domingos. ¿Es lo que me dijiste? Yo tengo 2 hermanos, 3 hermanas, mi papá y mamá. También, como yo dije en clase, tengo mi esposo y dos hijos—Mike y Brad. Estoy muy feliz que tú estás en mi clase. Muy pronto vas a aprender inglés, y entonces puedes escribir usando inglés.

[You have one brother and one sister, your mother and father. You are very happy in your house. Your uncle and aunt came [come?] on Sundays. Is that what you told me? I have 2 brothers, 3 sisters, my father and mother. Also, as I said in class, I have my husband and two sons—Mike and Brad. I am very happy that you are in my class. Very soon you will learn English, and then you will be able to write in English.]

Mrs. Miller deciphered what Miguel seemed to be saying and responded in Spanish, first restating his message and then adding information about herself and encouraging him.

After the first few entries, Miguel began to mix the English words and phrases he was learning in with his Spanish. At times, when he wanted to communicate something important, he switched completely to Spanish and apologized. Mrs. Miller sometimes responded in Spanish and sometimes in English. Near the middle of September Miguel switched completely to English, a simple entry written with help from the classroom aide:

*September 16*

My name is Miguel. I'm from El Salvador. I'm ten years old. Today is Tuesday.

After that, much of Miguel's journal writing consisted of the repetition of English patterns similar to those he was working on in his workbook. Mrs. Miller often repeated the patterns and expanded them, adding new vocabulary and structures. (In an interview with Joy Peyton, Mrs. Miller said that she used that approach with all beginning English learners, to let them read familiar patterns while intro-

ducing new language.) In the interaction below, Miguel picked up on one of those structures to develop a new pattern.

*September 20*

Miguel: Today is Monday
My name is Miguel
You Mrs Miller my name is Miguel is student Mrs Miller is techer

Teacher: Today is Monday. Tomorrow will be Tuesday. You can write the days of the week. Miguel is a student. You are a boy. Do you like to watch TV?

Miguel: Today is Tuesday
I like to wach tus.
I like to study English
I like to pley football
I like to ken
I like to pteyl gan [play games]

By November, Mrs. Miller and Miguel began having actual conversations, still using simple structures. Mrs. Miller's writing provided a repetition of what Miguel had written, as well as new topics, words, and structures, which he then used freely in his entries. When she used words she thought would be new to him, she wrote them in both English and Spanish:

Teacher: I like Barcroft school.The people are very nice. The boys and girls are nice. Many people go to Barcroft school. Did you go to a big school in El Salvador?

Miguel: Yes meny pleople go to Barcroft Yes mi go in el salvador a big school meny people school in el salvador I like america to yuo like America

Teacher: Yes, I like America very much. What subjects (sujetos) did they teach you in El Salvador? Did you study (Estudiaste) math (matemáticas)? Did you study science (ciencia)? Did you study history (historia)?
In Barcroft school you study math. You study science. You study history. You study English.

Miguel: Yes stoti math in study science in study stori in English . . .

Miguel often reverted back to repeating fixed English patterns he

knew, with vocabulary substitutions, but more and more he moved away from those patterns to more authentic language. Near the end of the year he began to discuss issues that were important to him.

*May 4*

Miguel: . . . I want to go to summer school Mrs Miller my mother want to know how mush cost summer school I go with claudia to summer school Mrs Miller. . . .

Teacher: Summer school for you costs $40.00 and for Claudia $34.00. All together it costs $74.00 for the 2 of you. You need to get the money and application in by the end of May.

Miguel: Mrs Miller I bring the money . . . is very impoertant go to summer school.

*May 12*

Miguel: . . . my sister is sad mrs. miller. be cast she not have friends in the claass.

Teacher: I'm sorry Claudia is sad. There are many nice children in Dr. S____'s HILT class in the morning. Doesn't Claudia have friends there? Has she had any friends this year? Maybe she should talk to Dr. S____ or Mrs. W____. They could probably help her. Mrs. A____ could help her too.

Miguel: maybe mrs. A____ help my sister for have friends mrs miller I sad too mrs miller. my sister want friends. . . .

It appears that the journal provided Miguel with a very important place to express himself and learn English. During certain class activities, when the teacher was working with the whole class or a group of students, the aide was busy, and Miguel wasn't working in his workbook, he seemed lost and stared out the window or drew pictures in a notebook. But when journal time came, he could participate. In the journal he could use the patterns he was working on in his workbook to actually communicate with another person who answered. While he was still manipulating those patterns in his workbook, he moved beyond them in his journal to authentic messages and structures.

It is impossible to know to what extent Mrs. Miller's role in the journal writing influenced Miguel's language and social development, but it appears that it was very important. Her writing, at his level and slightly beyond, served as a language "scaffold" (Cazden, 1983) on which he built his own writing. Her attention and the daily commu-

nication with her helped to promote his socialization. Several times he mentioned (in Spanish) his desire to be able to speak and write in English and his frustration that he wasn't doing better. She encouraged him, telling him how well he was doing. It seems that her attitudes, expressed in the journal, influenced his attitudes toward her class and school in general. After she had written several times how glad she was to have him in her class, he began to express his own happiness at being in her class and in school. At the end of the year Miguel wrote that he wanted to go to high school and get a good job, and he and Mrs. Miller reflected together about how much progress he had made since the beginning of the year. It is difficult to imagine, after watching Miguel in class for a year[7], where he would have gotten these opportunities for confidence and communication without the journal.

## Larry: The Defeated Student Who Blossomed[8]

Larry, the son of migrant farm workers, entered the fifth grade already branded a failure. Like the other students in his class, who ranged from age 10 to 16, he spoke Spanish, his first language, at home and on the playground. His exposure to English came from television, the radio, and school. He was unable to read materials at his own grade level, wrote very little and, unless a turnaround occurred, would continue to fail in school and drop out by the time he reached junior high to work in the fields, following the crops from one region to another. Larry's development as a writer is encouraging, for it shows how a defeated student can be motivated to change his attitudes and performance, given the right conditions for reading and writing.

On the first day the students in Larry's class wrote in their dialogue journals, most turned in the minimum amount required, three lines of writing. Larry submitted a blank sheet of paper. His teacher wrote in his journal anyway asking, "How can I answer you if you don't write to me?" The next day Larry wrote:

> I like math because I can count by five and tens. I like to write about Bo & Be & I like to draw the pictures & write the . . .

His words trailed off, reflecting the years he had managed to stay in school doing very little writing. But the teacher responded:

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[7]Joy Peyton did research for a year in this class.

[8]Larry's story is excerpted, with permission, from Hayes, Bahruth, and Kessler (1986) and informed by Hayes and Bahruth (1985).

I enjoy writing too. I also enjoy illustrating my stories when I finish. I also use pictures for ideas to write about. What problems bother you about writing?

Larry candidly answered:

Well, I can't not spell right. Thats what's bother me about writing.

After these initial, halting entries, Larry did start to write. His entries lengthened, and his topics included books he had been reading, his likes and dislikes, and poems that he particularly liked. He began to pose questions and answer the teacher's questions:

Teacher: Would you like to learn to play chess?

Larry: I taught that chess was lik checkers. But I no how to play checkers a lot. Have you play checkers & chinese checkers?

As he became more comfortable, confident, and secure with his writing, he began to write about his future:

Larry: I'm saying to my mom that I'm going to finish school and I am golling to college and study for a year and try for teacher because I like being a teacher.

Once he had filled the pages of his first journal, Larry asked whether he could begin another, adding, "do you remeber the frist day I didn't write guess like one line, I like writeing in my Journal."

This progress took time, but eventually Larry became a writer. With the rest of the class, he moved from the dialogue journal to many other kinds of writing, including history and science reports and contributions to books published within the class. Larry's teacher and the researchers working with his class believe that dialogue journal writing, which allows students to begin reading and writing where they are and in their own way, can serve as a catalyst to turn defeated students like Larry into readers and writers.

### Janny: The "Good Student" and the Development of a Voice

Janny's family came to the United States from Vietnam when she was very young, so all of her schooling took place in the United States and her writing does not show features of a nonnative English speaker. However, her first and home language was Chinese and her family

was active in the Vietnamese community in Los Angeles. We profile Janny because she represents a segment of students now in many classes in the United States—students from other countries who are bright, motivated, and determined to succeed. An examination of her writing during the year shows how a dialogue journal can provide such students with a voice. The journal becomes a place where they can reflect on what they are studying and learning as well as share freely their personal concerns and struggles with an interested adult, who serves as a model, but also participates as an equal in the sharing.

Janny was one of the top students in Leslee Reed's sixth grade class. She received among the highest scores in her class on the Reading and Math tests taken by all sixth graders in the school district at the end of the year. She was in the gifted program during her sixth grade year, was elected president of the class, was on the school council and drill team, was a school safety patrol, sang in the school chorus, and planned to play the violin in the orchestra in junior high.

At the beginning of the year Janny's journal entries were those of a good student who likes school and is eager to please. They were always neatly written and usually about school events and activities. They usually consisted of a brief review of the day's activities with a positive evaluation but little reflection or elaborating detail, as shown in this entry:

*September 23*

> Today in school we studied many things. In Geography we labeled places on the map. I finally got a chance to finish my name too. Every day when I have left the class I have realized that I have experienced and learned something new.

As Janny continued to write, she began to open up and express herself as an individual, writing much more than the three-sentence minimum, sometimes several pages, and giving her opinions on a variety of topics. Only parts of her entries are shown in the examples below. At times her opinions took the form of advice to the teacher or even complaints about what had happened in school. This is something that many of Mrs. Reed's students did in their journals once they had passed through what she considered to be rather boring, "model student" writing. It is also something she encouraged.

*November 24*

> Mrs. Reed, why don't you give grades? I think it would be a little bit better because then we would know how we're doing.

*February 11*

I wish you would make the Spelling's Bee's a lot harder.

*February 23*

The Spelling Bee we had today wasn't very good. It wasn't a real Spelling Bee it was more of a contest to see who could write faster.

Janny's opinions often extended beyond complaints to a variety of subjects, from the Presidential elections to the MX missile:

*October 14*

Today we read a weekly reader about the M.X. Missile. Some people want it and some people don't. I don't like the idea.

*November 4*

Today is election day and the polls are all going to be very busy. I certainly wish I knew who was going to win. I sure hope our new president will be a good one. I don't really care for any of the people who are running.

Most striking about Janny's journal is the level of sharing of opinions and ideas between her and Mrs. Reed. As they continued writing to each other, they developed a rapport that looked very much like a conversation between close friends. Sometimes this sharing revolved around personal topics:

*December 12*

Janny: Have you put up a Christmas tree yet at your house? We haven't yet at mine. My mother says she thinks she'll get one today after all it's so close to christmas. My mother says that she thinks she likes a real christmas tree better than a fake on. I do like real christmas trees but I think it would be wiser to get a fake one. Artificial trees might cost a little more than real ones but they can last a whole lot longer.

Teacher: No! I haven't put up a tree in my house yet. I hope to get it done this weekend. I agree with your Mother and insist on a fresh new tree. There is something about the smell and feel that I really enjoy. I do have some Christmas baking done!

But it also included topics the class was studying in school:

*January 15*

Teacher: Were you impressed with the time and energy it took Dr. Martin Luther King to get the world (and the U.S.) to understand that black people (and all people) have rights?

Janny: Yes I was impressed at how hard Mr. King worked so that his people could have rights like other people. He succeeded after a long time of hard work and he did not give up really surprised me!

Topics that Janny read or heard about:

*May 22*

Janny: Mrs. Reed do you think that plants have feelings? My father said that he thinks they do. He said that in the newspaper they had an article about an experiment at UCLA. Do you think that it could actually be true? I don't know what to think.

Teacher: Yes, I've read about experiments that show plants do respond to cruel words and actions by actually showing a kind of fear. They seem to respond to pleasant sounds and voices! I am inclined to think plants, like people, do better in a happy, pleasant environment.

Experiences outside of school:

*February 17*

Janny: Yesterday I want to the San Diego zoo. It was really fun.

Teacher: How lucky you were! The San Diego Zoo is such a great place to go! Did you go into the hummingbird house? It is one of my favorite places.

Janny: No, I didn't go into the hummingbird house. I don't think they have one. We had a map of the zoo and it didn't seem to have any place located for a hummingbird house. Anyway we went to the snake exhibitions. I was really surprised at the length of some of them and also the width of some of them too. There was one snake that was around 3 to 4 feet in length and there was a snake that was the length of this journal.

And plans for the future:

*May 20*

Janny: If I am going to V I am going to be in the orchestra. I really love the things that the orchestra can do. I think it would even be better than the chorus.

Teacher: It is fun to be in an orchestra! I played violin in orchestras for many years! You'd really love it. What instrument do you want to play? Are you taking music lessons now?

Janny: It is such a coincidence because I was planning to play the violin or the flute in the orchestra. Both of them have very beautiful sounds. It really would be a pleasure to know how to play one. I haven't been taking music lessons but I hope I can be one of the beginners there.

During these discussions Mrs. Reed had the opportunity to display her tremendous enthusiasm for learning, and Janny, in response to this enthusiasm, seemed eager to share her own knowledge.

An important part of Mrs. Reed's class is reading for pleasure. Each day she reads part of a book aloud to the class and talks about books by the same author. There is time for silent reading of self-chosen books during which she reads as well. A reading specialist comes in several times during the year to talk about books, and the room is filled with books. Even though students are not asked to write about their reading in their journals, many do. Janny and Mrs. Reed had conversations in their journal about their reading that resemble those Nancie Atwell (1987) has with her junior high students in reading journals. These are clearly conversations between two people who enjoy and value reading.

*November 14*

Janny: I'm reading the last edition of "The Great Brain." I can see why you really like the books. they are very interesting and exciting.

Teacher: One of the reasons I enjoy the *Great Brain* series is because you get some ideas about the way life was during those years. We can't imagine life without indoor plumbing and lots of schools close to home. When you read those books you get some ideas about the way people lived then.

*January 28*

Janny: I finished reading another one of Enid Blyton's books called fall into adventure. It was very exciting. Enid Blyton books are just the best books that I ever read.

Teacher: It is interesting to read several books by the same author, isn't it? You sort of learn their style so you have an idea what to expect! I don't think I've read that one.

*March 12*

Janny: I really have enjoyed reading the Phantom Tollbooth. It would go under "fantasies" wouldn't it. It really is funny and it makes the reader actually feel as if they were really the main character. Have you read the book? I guess you already have because you told me what it was like. I don't think that I've every enjoyed a book more.

Teacher: I'm so pleased that you like *Phantom Tollbooth*! It is one of my very favorite books. I never read it that I don't have to laugh out loud. The play on words and the humor really amuse me.

Janny, like many girls her age in Mrs. Reed's class, wrote in her journal about conflicts with other girls in the class, often over who was "best friend" with whom and how her friends were treating her. At one point she had a falling out with her best friend, the other top student in the class, also from China. During the several weeks that this problem lasted Janny vented her feelings, and Mrs. Reed tried to offer understanding and encouragement.

*May 1*

Janny: I'm feeling quite down in the dumps today. Guess who's putting me there. You're right Lisa and Sophia. Oh I'm so misearble I could cry. In fact I did start crying at the beginning of class but I stopped myself. If I didn't, I would have had tears streaming down my face. And also at a very fast rate. . . .

Teacher: I am not surprised! You've been so calm and serene outwardly that inside you must be in a big turmoil. You have handled your feelings extremely well, but you are human! To cry . . . is natural and would release a lot of pressure which you've felt. The misunderstanding with Sophia and the pressure of the spelling bee is much too much.

I had the feeling this afternoon that the problem was being worked out! Could it be?

Finally, through the journal, Janny was able to work through a problem that is common to high-achieving students—envy from others in the class. The class's regular spelling bees were very important to her; she was a good speller and usually won. At one point students from Mrs. Reed's class were chosen to compete in a schoolwide spelling bee, the winners of which would represent the school in a district-wide competition. Janny was excited and nervous about this competition, and wrote about it often in her journal.

*February 27*

Mrs. Reed I hope you will tell us who's going to be in the Spelling Bee on Monday. I'm straining my nerves. I am just so nervous about it that I don't think I can stand it any longer. I was looking forward to it for so long. . . .

She was chosen as one of the contestants from her class, wrote about her excitement for several days, and won the spelling bee, meaning that she would represent the school on April 29. However, the victory was not a happy one. In the journal she expressed her frustration, and Mrs. Reed supported and encouraged her.

*March 5*

Janny: I feel wierd. I don't know why. I don't really want to compete on April 29. I think I've had enough of Spelling Bees no matter how exciting they've been. I wonder if I can win? . . . Do you know someone named Maria G? Well you gave me the word "beginner" and I spelled it correctly so I won. Well Maria says that you just gave me the word because you wanted to. I know that's not true because I saw you pick out the word from the basket. . . . I wish that I didn't win the Spelling Bee. I know I should be happy about winning but I feel worse than I ever did. I don't care if I cry too much or what but I have to anyway. I feel very much as if the whole world is against me. Even what I thought were my best of friends. The people I trusted now hate me. Why can't they understand?

Teacher: It is difficult to understand—and I understand and share your weird feelings! Do cry if you feel like it! You are human, your feelings are hurt and you are not at fault.

> It is very disturbing. It is most difficult to be a good loser! Somehow being a loser you feel better if you can criticize or "tear down" the winner. The act of destroying the winner makes a poor loser feel better. Being a winner always puts you in the position of being a target for anyone who feels insecure or inferior.
>
> You must try to win in April! I have great confidence in you—as do all of the other teachers here at Alexandria! You may not win, you may win, I don't know which. I do know you will do your very best to do honor to yourself and to your school. You are too fine a person to do otherwise!
>
> I've read and answered most of the journals of our class already this evening. Almost all have been proud of you and angry that others were being mean.

Students like Janny, who enjoy school, excel in all aspects of it, and are not struggling with the basics of English, need a place to discuss their interests with someone who understands them and can expand their thinking. Janny and several other of the top students in her class (see Staton, 1989, for a profile of another student, from the Philippines) took advantage of the opportunity the journal provided them to work through, with Mrs. Reed, very important personal issues as well as things they were learning both in and out of school.

* * * * * *

These student profiles make one point very clear: Dialogue journals can be used in almost any program, with almost anyone. Whether students start out drawing or labelling pictures, writing lists of words, or writing extended and thoughtful texts, they can keep and benefit from a dialogue journal. The teacher benefits as well, for the permanent record of writing gives a rich, ongoing picture of students' development as individuals, thinkers, and writers.

## CHAPTER 9

# CONCLUSION
# STUDYING DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING

*A Reflection by Joy Peyton*

My first introduction to dialogue journal writing was in 1980, when Jana Staton and Roger Shuy asked me to join them in their study of dialogue journals in Leslee Reed's sixth grade class of native English speakers. As the Research Assistant, my job was to number the journal pages and interactions, while at the same time reading the journals and taking notes on what I observed. I therefore had the luxury of poring over the lives and thoughts of 26 individuals as they moved through the school year (they had all given permission for us to study and write about their writing), and I was fascinated. I watched Joan complain about and fight against almost everything that happened that year but also stay in class. She was never kicked out of class and never sent to the office, routine events in her previous school years. I watched Tai work through what it meant to be a responsible young woman and student and handle her temper and emotions so she could think and work productively. I watched Gordon deal with the intricacies and difficulties of math and eventually move from frustration to love of it. (These stories are told in detail in Staton et al., 1988.) Mrs. Reed told us, and we came to believe, that the dialogue journals were the keystone of her teaching. This was where the battles were fought and a great deal of learning was done—not only about school subjects, but about life and growing up.

In 1981 Mrs. Reed was transferred to another school in which 65% of the students, and nearly all of the students in her class, were nonnative English speakers. We all wondered if the journals would "work." How could she write with students who didn't really know English? At the end of the year we collected, numbered, and read those journals, and

were fascinated again. Yes, they were genuine dialogues; they had worked; but in some ways they were very different. These students didn't complain very much, at least at the beginning of the year, unlike the native English speakers. Instead, they asked question, after question, after question: "Where are you from?" "How old are you?" "Do we have school next week?" "What is Geography?" "What does 'equator' mean?" They wrote about their countries and their experiences adjusting to their new culture and language. These students were attempting to work out meanings on many, many levels, and again we followed them through the year as they did that. (The stories of some of these students are told in Peyton & Staton, in press.)

An interesting thing happened when we started to talk about these journals in workshops and at conferences in the early 1980s. At first there was a certain amount of questioning of the whole idea —"Why should students who are just learning English be allowed to write about whatever they want to? What good is that kind of activity?" "There are so many errors, and the teacher doesn't correct them. How will these students ever learn English if their errors are not corrected?" "Who has time for that sort of thing? We have a detailed curriculum to cover." Of course, all of us have learned a great deal since then about language acquisition, writing development, and learning in general, and open-ended reading and writing activities like dialogue journal writing have become more the norm than the strange or threatening exception.

Since those days many more teachers have decided to incorporate dialogue journals into their work, and I have had the privilege of talking to and spending time in the classrooms of many dialogue journal teachers and students. Over and over as I have observed and listened, I have been struck by the importance of the three dynamics that Mary Ellen Giacobbe and Nancie Atwell have talked about: time, ownership, and response (cf. Atwell, 1987, pp. 54–72).

To do any significant writing, in dialogue journals or elsewhere, students need *time*—time to think, plan, talk with others, or just gaze out the window. The most stimulating classes I have been in have been those in which there was plenty of time to write (and read). Naveed, in Ruth Sedei's first grade class, at first took nearly all of the reading and writing time available (at least two hours each day) to read and write in his journal. That's how long he needed. As time went on he, like the other students in his class, integrated his journal writing with his other reading and writing, but he still decided himself how much time to spend on it. In Mrs. Reed's sixth grade class Ben kept his journal with him all day and wrote whenever he could—during breaks, during lunch, after school, when he had finished his other work. Of course, most students in Naveed's and Ben's classes

didn't need nearly as much time as Naveed and Ben did, but the fact that the students themselves determined the amount of time they would spend writing was important. Most ESL classes, however, last for less than an hour and don't have the luxury of long reading and writing times. But even in these classes there can be a quiet period in which students are free to put down their thoughts without hearing the teacher's voice or following the school's rigorous plan.

When we feel a sense of *ownership*, we take responsibility. Students who know they will read and write regularly begin to take ownership of that time. The students I have observed who felt they owned their journals and their writing time rarely needed to be reminded to get the journals out. They came into the room, got their journal, and began reading and writing or talking quietly, sharing parts of an entry with another student. First graders in Mrs. Sedei's class sometimes brought in bits of paper on which they had written words they wanted to use or beginnings of entries. They knew they would be writing, so had thought about their topics and gathered their resources. When I asked Gabriela if I could take a completed journal home to copy, she made me promise I would return it the next day, because she used it as a basis for her writing. The students in Kelly Miller's fourth through sixth grade class felt they were each writing a book collaboratively with Mrs. Miller, the story of their life for that year. Many talked about how they would read that book years later.

We have only recently realized the importance of *response* for developing language and writing. Not correction, but a real response that appreciates, contributes, extends, questions, critiques. A response that takes our thoughts and verbal creations seriously, stimulates us to continue them and helps us to take them still further. When a response is consistent and predictable, students begin responding themselves and a true dialogue is established, in which both participants benefit.

Professional writers have known for years how essential time, ownership, and response are for the success of their writing. Fortunately, we are discovering that they are also essential for students learning English, no matter what their age or language ability. Dialogue journal writing is one way to assure that these dynamics are operating in the classroom.

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Steffensen, M. S. (1988). The dialogue journal: A method for improving cross-cultural reading comprehension. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, *5*(1), 193–203.

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## APPENDIX

# FURTHER READING

There is extensive material available for the teacher desiring to know more about dialogue journal use and research. Although not all of it focuses on limited English proficient students, the approaches and findings are in most cases generalizable to them.

For those wishing to conduct **TEACHER TRAINING WORKSHOPS** on the use of dialogue journal writing, a workshop packet is available, designed to be used along with this handbook. It includes detailed guidelines for conducting the workshop, over 30 samples of student writing that can be made into overhead transparencies, background materials for the presenter, and handouts. The packet is available from the Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118–22nd St. N.W., Washington, DC 20037, attn: *Dialogue*.

A **NEWSLETTER** called *Dialogue* was published three times a year from 1982 to 1989. In it, teachers and researchers describe their uses of dialogue journals and research related to their use. Back issues are available from the Center for Applied Linguistics, attn: *Dialogue*.

Two **TEACHER HANDBOOKS** focus on the use of dialogue journals with deaf students: *It's Your Turn Now: A Handbook for Teachers of Deaf Students*. Cindy Bailes, Susan Searls, Jean Slobodzian, and Jana Staton. 1986. Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University (focusing on elementary schools). Available from Outreach PreCollege Program, KDES, PAS6, 800 Florida Avenue, NE, Washington, DC 20002; and *Conversations in writing: A guide to using dialogue journals with deaf post-secondary and secondary students*. Jana Staton, Ed. 1980. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University. Available from the Gallaudet Research Institute, Gallaudet University, 800 Florida Avenue, NE, Washington, DC 20002.

A **BOOK** describing research and practice with both personal and dialogue journal writing, with nonnative English speakers, primarily adults, is also available from Teachers of English to Speakers of Other

Languages: *Students and teachers writing together: Perspectives on journal writing*. Joy Kreeft Peyton (Ed.). 1990.

There are also numerous other books and articles about dialogue journal writing. They are divided here into overall categories of interest.

## Books and Articles

### *Dialogue journal use with various student populations*

*General - with any students*

Kreeft, Joy. (1984). Dialogue writing: Bridge from talk to essay writing. *Language Arts, 61*(2), 141–150.

Lindfors, Judith Wells. (1988). From "talking together" to "being together in talk." *Language Arts, 65*(2), 135–141.

Sayers, Dennis. (1986, December). "Interactive" writing with computers: One solution to the time problem. *Dialogue, 3*(4), 9–10.

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Staton, Jana, Shuy, Roger W., Peyton, Joy K., & Reed, L. (1988). *Dialogue journal communication: Classroom, linguistic, social and cognitive views*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

*With nonnative English speaking students*

Lindfors, Judith Wells. (1988). From helping hand to reciprocity to mutuality: Dialogue journal writing with Zulu students. *Journal of Learning, 1*(1), 63–85.

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Staton, Jana, Peyton, Joy Kreeft, & Gutstein, Shelley (Eds.). (1986, March). Dialogue journals in ESL settings [theme issue]. *Dialogue, 3*(2).

Staton, Jana, Peyton, Joy Kreeft, & Gutstein, Shelley (Eds.). (1988, December). Interactive writing in bilingual education [theme issue]. *Dialogue, 5*(3).

*With migrant students*

Davis, Fran. (1983). Why you call me emigrant?: Dialogue journal writing with migrant youth. *Childhood Education, 60*(2), 110–116.

Hayes, Curtis W., & Bahruth, Robert. (1985). Querer es poder. In J. Hansen, T. Newkirk, & D. Graves (Eds.), *Breaking ground: Teachers relate reading and writing in the elementary school* (pp. 97–108). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Staton, Jana, Peyton, Joy Kreeft, & Gutstein, Shelley (Eds.). (1986, September). Dialogue journals for developing literacy in refugee, migrant, and adult basic education [theme issue]. *Dialogue, 3*(3).

*With deaf students*

Albertini, John. (1990). Coherence in deaf students' writing. In J. K. Peyton (Ed.), *Students and teachers writing together: Perspectives on journal writing* (pp. 127–136). Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

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*With young children*

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*With special needs students*

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*With teachers in teacher education*

Brinton, Donna, & Holten, Christine. (1989). What novice teachers focus on: The practicum in TESL. *TESOL Quarterly, 23*(2), 343–350.

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*Dialogue journals and content-area instruction*

Borasi, Raffaella, & Rose, Barbara J. (in press). Journal writing and mathematics instruction. *Educational Studies in Mathematics*.

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# *Dialogue Journal Writing with Nonnative English Speakers:*

## A Handbook for Teachers

Joy Kreeft Peyton and Leslee Reed

Professional writers have known for years how essential *time*, *ownership*, and *response* are for the success of their writing. Fortunately, we are discovering that these factors are also essential when students write, no matter what their age or language ability. Dialogue journal writing is one way to provide these dynamics for the students in your classroom. If you have no experience with this activity, Joy Kreeft Peyton and Leslee Reed will get you started. Between them, they have 30 years of first-hand experience with dialogue journal writing. Experienced practitioners will find new ideas to revitalize their teaching.

Peyton and Reed explain how to

- effectively start dialogue journal writing with students
- maintain the dialogue once begun
- deal with typical problems that may arise

This handbook is the first comprehensive volume to offer practical advice in an easy-to-use format free of jargon. It is recommended for teachers of nonnative English-speaking students in mainstream, bilingual, or ESL programs, from kindergarten through high school. It also has direct application to native English-speaking, gifted and talented, learning disabled, and special education students.

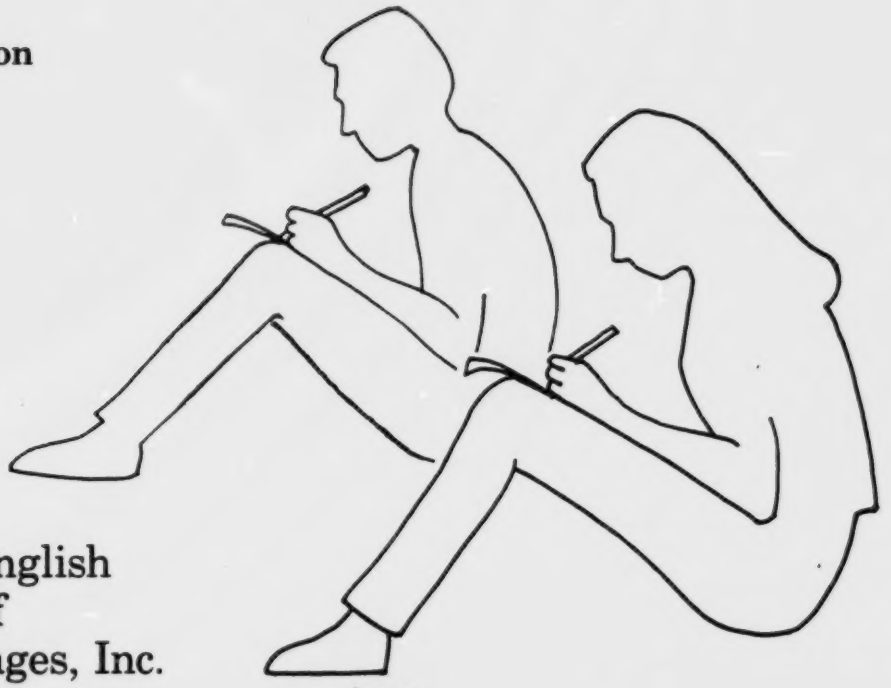
ISBN 0-939791-37-4

**Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.**

# Dialogue Journal Writing with Nonnative English Speakers

## An Instructional Packet for Teachers and Workshop Leaders

**Joy Kreeft Peyton**
**and**
**Jana Staton**



Teachers of English
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# Dialogue Journal Writing with Nonnative English Speakers

## An Instructional Packet for Teachers and Workshop Leaders

Joy Kreeft Peyton
Jana Staton

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# 1. Introduction: How to Use the Packet

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# Introduction: How to Use the Packet

This packet contains guidelines and materials for presenting a workshop on dialogue journal writing to teachers working with students who are learning English. It is designed for presentations to teachers, administrators, teacher trainers (in preservice or inservice workshops), and teacher educators (in institutions of higher education). The examples and many of the issues presented focus on elementary through high school students, but most of the ideas are general enough to use in a workshop with teachers of adults as well. (For supporting material on dialogue journal writing with adults, see Peyton & Staton, 1991.)

In our experience 2 hours is a good length of time for a workshop. The materials here can be covered in 2 hours (without any of the optional activities), but the entire workshop and each section and activity can easily be shortened or lengthened as appropriate. In the guidelines we have suggested approximate times for each section and each activity, but these times are flexible. All of the group activities suggested are optional except one. Choose among them according to the participants, your goals, and the time available. You will probably want to vary activities from workshop to workshop.

The workshop is intended to be an overview of the benefits of and strategies for dialogue journal use, and it is suitable for teachers who have students of many ages and language proficiency levels. The guidelines are therefore quite general and include student writing at all levels. You may want to supplement these materials and examples with your own in order to adapt the workshop to the level of students the participants are working with and to the participants' familiarity with dialogue journal use.

The ideas in this packet are expanded considerably, and more examples of student writing are provided, in the teacher's handbook, *Dialogue Journal Writing With Limited English Proficient Students: A Handbook for Teachers* (Peyton & Reed, 1990, also available from TESOL; see the flier on p. 6-5 for ordering information). The experienced dialogue journal presenter can use this packet effectively alone, but the handbook is a useful additional resource. The corresponding sections of the handbook are indicated throughout the guidelines for easy reference. You may want to have copies of the handbook available for purchase at the workshop or hand out the flyer to inform participants of its availability.

The packet contains the following materials:

## Workshop Abstract

This abstract can be used to introduce the workshop to administrators in your school, to propose the workshop at conferences, or to publicize a workshop.

## Guidelines for Conducting a Dialogue Journal Workshop

The guidelines are presented as an outline of information and activities that can be included in the workshop, a suggested sequence and time frames, and masters for making the accompanying overhead transparencies. Information about each point is deliberately brief to make the guidelines easy to follow. The guidelines follow the layout of the handbook closely, and more detailed information about each point can be easily found there. Most of the activities mentioned are optional, and how many to include depends on how much time is available. We suggest that you choose among the activities rather than doing them all. Likewise, the times suggested give a general idea of how long the section might take, but you can easily adjust them according to the focus of the workshop and the time available.

## Overhead Transparencies

This section contains masters from which to make overhead transparencies. The guidelines

indicate where to show the transparencies, and they are explained where necessary. In many cases there are more transparencies than you will want to use, especially where the examples represent several grade levels. Simply choose the most appropriate ones or substitute your own.

## Sample Student Entries and Sample Teacher Responses

These entries come from the actual dialogue journal writing of students from primary, upper elementary, and high school grades. Participants can respond to the entries in writing, discuss their own responses, and then discuss the actual teacher's response (which can be shown on a transparency).

## Handouts for Participants

The following handouts can be photocopied and distributed to participants:

- Dialogue Journal Writing With Limited English Proficient Students, which gives an overview of dialogue journal in a question-answer format
- A Brief Guide for Getting Started With Dialogue Journals, which might be used during the workshop in the discussion of getting started and maintaining the practice
- Sample issues of *Dialogue*, the newsletter about dialogue journals, with information about ordering back issues
- A flyer with information about ordering the dialogue journal handbook.

## Background Information for the Workshop Presenter

The background materials will not necessarily be given to the teachers attending the workshop (although they could be). They supply information to help you prepare the workshop and a list of publications in which to find more information.

- History of Dialogue Journal Writing describes the beginnings of dialogue journal use as we know them, the populations with whom dialogue journals have been used, and the research on dialogue journals.
- Bibliography of Dialogue Journal Publications lists books, articles, research reports, and handbooks written about dialogue journals, both those in published form and those available through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service.
- Summary of Dialogue Journal Research Findings gives the bibliographic information for the works cited in Transparency 29, which summarizes research findings.

All the handouts in this packet are reproducible under copyright law.

### References

Peyton, J. K., & Reed, L. (1990). *Dialogue journal writing with limited English proficient students: A handbook for teachers*. Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

Peyton, J. K., & Staton, J. (Eds). (1991). *Writing our lives: Reflections on dialogue journal writing with adults learning English*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Regents.

# 2. Workshop Abstract

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# Dialogue Journal Workshop Abstract

The objective of this workshop is to familiarize participants with current knowledge about dialogue journal writing and to show how to use it with nonnative English-speaking students. Dialogue journals, one powerful form of written interaction between students and their teacher, are currently being used effectively in many contexts and with students of all ages. Dialogue journals are particularly effective with students learning English (or any language) as a second language.

Discussion will include characteristics of dialogue journal writing that promote interaction and language acquisition, benefits to teachers and students, guidelines for getting started with dialogue journals, and some issues and ways to address them. Participants in the workshop will have opportunities to write to each other and to respond to actual student entries in dialogue journals, and there will be time for questions and discussion.

The workshop is being conducted by _____ (and _____), who is/are _____.

[Tailor this basic description to meet the interests of possible participants and the needs of your particular situation.]

# 3 Guidelines for Conducting a Dialogue Journal Workshop



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# Guidelines for Conducting a Dialogue Journal Workshop

*Total workshop time without optional activities is 120 minutes.*

## 1. Introduction of Participants

[APPROXIMATELY 10 MINUTES]

Before starting the workshop, ask participants about their previous experience with personal journal and dialogue journal writing, the types of classrooms in which they will be using dialogue journals (English as a second language [ESL] for the entire day or part of the day, mainstream, bilingual, and so on), the grade levels of the students, and the teachers' purposes for using dialogue journals. You can then adapt the workshop as it proceeds to meet the needs of those present. It is also a good idea to explain the kind(s) of classroom(s) in which you have used dialogue journals, the grade level(s) of the students involved, and your reasons for using them.

### Optional Activity 1

[WRITING, 5 MINUTES; DISCUSSION, 5 MINUTES]

To give participants an initial experience with written dialogue, ask them to choose a partner and spend a few minutes writing to each other. Each member of the pair writes to the other, they exchange papers, and each responds. You can leave the topic open or suggest that they write about their thoughts on journal writing. When they have finished, discuss the experience briefly—how did they feel about writing to a peer? Did they learn anything new? Did they have any qualms? and so on. This warmup exercise should be kept short.

### Optional Activity 2

[10 MINUTES]

To explore participants' prior knowledge, discuss with them what they know and think about journal writing in general, including their emotional reactions and concerns. In our experience many teachers have used "personal" journals (students write frequently and the teacher reads the journals occasionally, possibly making brief comments); those journals may be a good place to start. If they already know something about dialogue journals, you might start there. A small group can discuss as a whole; a larger group might discuss first in pairs or small groups and then share their ideas with the whole group. You can list comments on an overhead transparency or chart paper.

## 2. Overview of the Workshop

[5 MINUTES]

Tell the participants that the workshop will consist of the following:

**Transparency 1**

- An overview of the characteristics of dialogue journal writing
- Settings in which dialogue journal writing can be used
- Benefits of dialogue journal writing to students and teachers
- Some results of research on dialogue journal use
- Some guidelines for getting started
- Some strategies for maintaining the dialogue
- Some possible problems and suggestions for addressing them
- Written response to student entries
- Discussion and questions.

## 3. Characteristics of Dialogue Journal Writing

[10 MINUTES]

(See handbook (Peyton & Reed, 1990), "What Is a Dialogue Journal?", p. 3, for more information.)

You may want to show **Transparency 2,** which lists the characteristics, as an overview and then take it off to show examples of student writing.

## A Dialogue Journal Is a Written Interaction Between a Teacher and Students

The interaction can be conducted in a bound notebook, on a computer disk, or through electronic mail, but it is important that the dialogue journal be kept completely separate from other class work.

You might pass around some sample dialogue journals from your own students, if you have permission to share them, so participants can see what they look like.

Show **Transparencies 3a, 3b, 4, and 5a and 5b** as dialogue journal examples, selecting the ones that are most appropriate for the participants, as you discuss the following characteristics of dialogue journal writing. (All of the student writing is provided here with student permission. In most cases, names have been changed.)

### Transparencies 3a and 3b

Michael is a sixth grade student from Burma who had recently arrived in the United States and was in the early stages of learning English.

### Transparency 4

Edwin is a 10th grade student from El Salvador who had been in the United States for 1½ years. He spoke no English when he came here.

### Transparencies 5a and 5b

Erik is a first grade student from Vietnam. He was born in the United States but spoke Vietnamese at home.

## The Writing Is Done Regularly Throughout the School Year

Both students and the teacher should write at least once a week to retain the sense of an interaction. Most teachers believe it is better to write more often than that, and some teachers write with their students every day. (Leslee Reed, coauthor of the dialogue journal handbook, wrote to 25 students every school day for 20 years!)

## The Writing Is Student Generated

Studies of classroom interaction have found that most talk is teacher directed and that much of it involves no more talk from students than a word or sentence in an exercise. The dialogue journal interaction is an opportunity for students to express themselves freely and at length on topics of their choice. The student usually writes first and initiates the majority of the topics. The teacher's contributions often support and sustain student topic development.

You might note here that in most cases the teacher's writing roughly matches the students' in length.

## The Writing Is Functional

In the dialogue journal, students might narrate personal experiences, but they can also seek information, ask for help, give information and opinions, and even critique lessons or complain about classroom events. For example, in **Transparencies 3a and 3b** Michael's entries include:

- an opinion ("You know on this week like the silly week")
- a request for an opinion ("Did you think Level 10 is hard for me?")
- a request for clarification ("What did you mean about the valentines . . . ?")
- a description of a personal problem (" . . . we have to give the cards to someone, and I have to buy the card, but I can't buy the cards thats is the problems")
- a complaint ("Ricardo says I could be the catcher and he break his promise").

In **Transparency 4** Edwin discusses recent events in Nicaragua.

## The Writing Is Interactive

It is important to stress the conversational quality of the writing. The dialogue journal is not a language exercise or a composition for the teacher to grade or comment on. Ideally, it has the qualities of a good conversation. Both parties seek and provide information. Both choose topics. Student and teacher show genuine interest in each other and each other's topics, and write in relation to what the other has written.

### The Writing Displays the Qualities of Both Oral Conversation and Written Text

Similar to oral conversation, the writing contains turn taking, questions and answers, requests for clarification, and mutually constructed topics. Like a polite conversation, there is no overt error correction. When something is incomprehensible, the reader requests clarification ("What word did you put there?").

Similar to written text, the writing contains no paralinguistic cues to assist in making meaning clear (intonation, pause, gaze, voice quality, ability to point). Instead the writer must construct meaning through the use of words. Feedback and response are not immediate. Several topics can be introduced in one turn.

### Optional Activity

[WRITING, 5 MINUTES; DISCUSSION, 5 MINUTES]

You may want to have participants write with each other at this point in the workshop rather than earlier. If they write here, the focus might be on their thoughts at this point about dialogue journal writing: What have they learned that they didn't know before? What excites them? What puzzles them? and so on.

## 4. Settings in Which Dialogue Journal Writing Can Be Used

[5 MINUTES]

Because the interaction is completely open ended, dialogue journals can be (and have been) used with students of all ages, in many different contexts, and for many different purposes.

- With native and nonnative English-speaking students
- With hearing and deaf students
- With students who have special learning needs—gifted and talented as well as learning disabled
- In elementary school, beginning with children around 6 years old—in self-contained, pull-out, ESL, or bilingual classes
- In intermediate, middle, and high school
- With adults in university, teacher training, adult basic education, and adult literacy programs
- In the student's native language or second language (English or a foreign language)
- For discussing personal or academic topics—math, science, social studies.

The articles in the appendix at the end of the handbook are arranged roughly according to these categories (see handbook, "Appendix: Further Reading," p. 119).

## 5. Benefits of Dialogue Journal Writing to Students and Teachers

[25 MINUTES]

(See handbook, "What Are the Benefits of Dialogue Journal Writing?", p. 13.)

The benefits discussed in this workshop fall into three general areas: communication, language and content learning, and reading and writing development.

### Communication

**1. Opportunities for communication between students and teachers are increased.** In most classes, teachers have very little time to talk with individual students. The dialogue journal provides time to interact on a one-to-one basis, giving the teacher and students a valuable opportunity to get to know each other better.

Note that the first teacher to use dialogue journals as we know them (Leslee Reed, in Los Angeles, California) used them as a way to communicate with her students; other benefits that she discovered—language and content learning and reading and writing development—occurred within this communication but were not her primary purpose for using the journals.

You might want to use this quotation from Bruner (1966) to show how important it is for students learning English as a second language to be able to communicate freely with their teacher:

> . . . what the teacher must be, to be an effective competence model, is a day-to-day working model with whom to interact. It is not so

much that the teacher provides a model to imitate. Rather, it is that the teacher can become a part of the student's internal dialogue—somebody whose respect he wants, someone whose standards he wishes to make his own. It is like becoming a speaker of a language one shares with somebody. The language of that interaction becomes a part of oneself, and the standards of style and clarity that one adopts for that interaction become a part of one's own standards. (p. 24)

Students in the early stages of learning English may need a place where they can communicate in their native language. If you, an aide, or another student knows the native language, the dialogue journal can provide an opportunity that students may not have elsewhere in the school day to develop concepts using that language. In an ESL program, the student will gradually make the transition to English. In a bilingual program, the native language may be used all year.

**2. Difficult or personal issues can be discussed in private.** Students may have issues or problems that they do not want to discuss in front of other class members, or even in person with the teacher, but that they feel free to discuss in the journal. These might include:

- Problems with learning English
  **Transparency 6—Andy**
  Point out where Andy (a sixth grade student from Korea) writes about his problems with learning English.

- Problems with school activities
  **Transparency 7—Tuyet**
  Tuyet, a female sixth grader from Vietnam, was gifted in math. When she was encouraged to work with a special group of students preparing for a citywide math meet, she felt uncomfortable because she was the only girl participating. She explained in the journal her struggle to decide whether she should stay with the group and her frustration at not being a boy.

- Problems with other students
  Return to **Transparency 6—Andy**
  In his second entry, Andy describes a problem he had with two other students ("today in the bookstore I was crying").

  **Transparency 8—Su Kyong**
  Su Kyong is in the sixth grade, from Korea. She has written, "Today at math time Lisa was bothering me every time. That's why I am not talking to her."

- Personal problems
  **Transparency 9—Maria**
  Maria is a high school junior from El Salvador.

Likewise, in the journal the teacher can bring up and discuss issues regarding student behavior or performance without involving other members of the class and can suggest solutions.

**Transparency 10—Michael**
This transparency shows two instances in which the teacher worked with Michael in the journal on his behavioral problems.

**Transparency 11—Teacher entry to Maria (high school)**

**3. The teacher gains information that can assist in lesson planning.**

- The teacher may find out that students haven't understood a lesson and that it needs to be explained again to them or the whole class.
  **Transparency 12—Michael**

- The teacher may find out that a student has a particular interest that can be pursued with the individual or the whole class.
  **Transparency 13—U Chal**
  U Chal is a sixth grader from Korea.

## Language and Content Learning

**1. The teacher can individualize language and content learning.**

**2. Students have regular opportunities to use the language they are learning in communicating a genuine message to a native speaker of the language in a nonthreatening situation.**

**3. The teacher can individualize the language input that students receive, roughly tailoring the writing so it is appropriate for each student.**

**Transparency 14—U Chal and Su Kyong**

The teacher's writing is more complex, with more advanced vocabulary, with U Chal, whose English proficiency is more advanced than Su Kyong's.

**Transparency 15—Teacher Modifications**

This transparency shows one teacher's responses to several students, who wrote about a story about an owl, read in class. Each response shows a different level of language use and thought requested.

**4. The teacher's writing provides a model of correct language use related to topics the student has written about and the words and structures the student has used.**

**Transparency 16—Teacher Modeling: Kemmy, Michael, and Andy (sixth grade)**

In the interaction with **Kemmy,** the teacher shows another way to say "I like Andy and I like Sompob"—"Sompob and Andy are good friends." Note that Kemmy then picks up on this construction in his next entry. The interaction with **Michael** shows how the teacher uses the same words and structures that Michael uses in a genuinely meaningful contribution. The same is true in the interaction with **Andy.** Here each of his statements is matched by a similar statement by the teacher.

Note: These examples were chosen to illustrate specific instances of teacher modeling, and the italics were added to focus attention on those instances. Often modeling was less direct—not a simple repetition of what the student said, but a discussion of the student's topic, aimed roughly at the student's level of comprehension. The teacher herself did not underline structures in her or the students' writing.

**Transparencies 17a and 17b—Naveed (first grade)**

Naveed is a first grader from Iran. His entries say:

> February 3: Today I forgot to bring my field trip slip.
>
> February 9: When we went on the field trip and when we went to the maze I tried to get lost, but I couldn't get lost.

Note that Naveed picks up on the teacher's spelling of *field trip.*

**5. Students can reflect on content covered in class, or topics that arise out of class, and the teacher can further their thought by offering additional information and asking questions.** (Return to **Transparency 13—U Chal,** and **Transparency 4—Edwin.**)

**6. The teacher can follow students' progress in learning written English.** Looking at students' journal writing over time gives an indication not only of their writing development but of their oral language development, as their writing reflects that development.

**Transparencies 18a and 18b—Catalina**

Catalina, a first grader from Costa Rica, began the year drawing and writing only words that she could copy from around the room or get help with. Later in the year, she wrote independently, using invented spelling. In this March entry she wrote, "This morning I looked at a car. The car hit a cat. The little cat died."

**Transparency 19—Ruqqaya**

Ruqqaya is a fourth grade student recently arrived from Pakistan. By May she has moved from listing things she likes to more extended discussion of a single topic, using more complex grammatical structures.

**Transparency 20—Development of Grammatical Structures: Michael**

You may want to use this transparency if participants are interested in students' grammatical development over time in the journals. It shows Michael's development in the use of the past tense. (Verbs that should indicate past tense are in italics.)

**Transparency 21—Diego**

Diego is a high school student from Mexico. Because he was in an intermediate English class at the beginning of the school year, we don't see the dramatic changes that occur in the journals of beginning writers. However, his writing flows much more smoothly and has much more life to it. He is using direct quotations and more clause embeddings, and his spelling has improved considerably. His teacher can also see from this entry areas where Diego's written English needs more work.

## Reading and Writing Development

**1. All students have regular opportunities for extended writing and reading for genu-**

**ine communicative purposes and on topics they are interested in.** Even those students who are at beginning stages in their English development and have limited English skills can express something in writing.

**Transparency 22—Kemmy**

Kemmy, a sixth grader from Vietnam, had recently begun attending school in the United States and knew little English. He asked for words that he needed, someone wrote them, and he copied them. Those words then became the basis for future entries.

**Transparencies 23a and 23b—Michael**

Michael's early writing involved asking questions, which resulted in a related reading text when the teacher responded.

If students cannot yet write, they can draw in their journals or copy words they see printed in the room.

**Transparency 24—Gabriela—first grade**

Gabriela copied her friends' names from their desks, where they were written in large print, and the word "clock" from a sign on the wall by the clock.

**Transparency 25—Cecilia**

After the teacher wrote her response to Cecilia's picture, she read it aloud with her.

Another way to work with beginning writers is to have them dictate their entry to the teacher, an aide, or another student, who writes it down, responds in writing, and then reads both entries aloud with the student.

**2. Students can play and experiment with written English without having to worry about getting a grade.**

**Transparency 26—Andy**

In these two entries, Andy experiments with new words he has looked up in his dictionary *(delighted, ill-tempered, nevertheless, anxiety)* and he plays with writing with his rendition of "oh no."

**3. Students can develop abilities that are important for their other writing.**

- Audience awareness

  **Transparency 27—Ray**

  At the beginning of the school year Ray, a third grade student, wasn't even sure whom he was writing to. By November he had developed both an awareness of and an interest in his audience.

- Topic elaboration

  **Transparency 28—Ben**

  Most students move from brief comments about several topics to fewer topics about which they elaborate considerably. Some students, like Ben, who are reluctant to speak in class, discuss topics at length in their journal.

**4. The teacher's writing in the journal provides a reading text that is often based on topics the student has written about, and, ideally, is roughly adjusted to the student's level of language development.** Some teachers have their students write in their dialogue journals about texts they are reading in class. This creates the opportunity for negotiating the meaning of the text with a proficient reader (the teacher).

**Optional Activity**

[SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION, 5 MINUTES; LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION, 5 MINUTES]

After you examine the interaction in Transparency 28, ask participants to discuss in small groups of three or four how Ben's language would differ (a) if he were talking to the teacher instead of writing, and (b) if he were writing an assigned essay on presidential assassination attempts (with some time to plan and revise). You can then ask groups to share their ideas. There are no right or wrong answers; your participants might discover some of these points:

*If the interaction were an oral conversation:*

- Turns would be much shorter
- There would be less elaboration of ideas within a turn
- There would be fewer explicit references (Brady, Reagan, "the parents" repeated)
- Sentence structure would be simpler
- There would be more direct address to the audience
- There would be more questions to audience ("What do you think?").

*If Ben's entries were an essay:*

- There would be no direct address
- More paragraphing would set off ideas
- Ideas might be more developed
- There would be more punctuation
- There would be fewer direct expressions of opinion ("I hope," "I am glad").

## 6. Some Results of Research on Dialogue Journal Use

[5 MINUTES]

Most teachers want to know if new practices have been studied and where they can find out more about those studies. Even if you are not familiar with the research on dialogue journals, you can use **Transparency 29,** a summary of research results, as a basis for discussion. The complete citations for the references listed in the transparency are given on page 7-10, which can also be used as a handout.

## 7. Some Guidelines for Getting Started With Dialogue Journals

[10 MINUTES]

Guidelines are covered in detail in the handbook ("Getting Started," p. 57). You will also want to draw heavily on your own experience and encourage questions and comments by the participants. You might want to cover the following points. Once you have covered each of them briefly, hand out A Brief Guide for Getting Started With Dialogue Journals (Handouts, pp. 6-2–6-3) and go over the first two sections (Introducing the Idea and Management) together.

- What to write in
- With whom to write
- How often to write
- When to write
- How much to write
- How to present the idea to students
- What to write about

This packet concentrates on open-ended journals, in which the students write about topics of their choice. Some teachers prefer to focus the writing on classroom content, books the students are reading, or other areas of interest, but without actually assigning topics. Participants may want to discuss various possibilities for the content of the writing.

## 8. Some Strategies for Maintaining the Dialogue

[10 MINUTES]

(See handbook, p. 61, "Keeping It Going: Strategies for Maintaining the Dialogue.")

This section is a very important part of the workshop, as the teacher's handling of the interaction itself will have a strong impact on its success. Each teacher must work out a style and approach that is personally comfortable and rewarding, but some general guidelines are necessary. Read together and discuss the last section of A Brief Guide for Getting Started With Dialogue Journals (Guidelines for Teacher Responses). Participants might also have other ideas for effective strategies to add to the list.

## 9. Some Common Issues and Problems

[10 MINUTES]

(See handbook, p. 61, "Keeping It Going: Strategies for Maintaining the Dialogue," and p. 69, "What to Do If . . . ?: Strategies for Handling Problems.")

The following issues are commonly raised by teachers who are learning about or using dialogue journals. Each one is discussed in the handbook. Again, draw on your own experience and perhaps offer examples of how you or other teachers have handled these problems:

1. The amount of time it takes for teachers to write
2. The privacy and confidentiality of the interaction
3. Responding to difficult students or student entries

- The student whose writing gets uncomfortably personal.
  **Transparency 30—Elizabeth**
  This transparency shows one type of "personal" entry from a sixth grader's journal—a student reports a serious family problem that he or she or other students are having. You might want to discuss the way the teacher handles it—she acknowledges its seriousness; attempts to get the student to work it out with her family; offers to take action herself but asks the student's permission before doing so; and assures the student of the confidentiality of their discussion.

- The student who doesn't want to write in the journal

- The student who repeats the same thing day after day
  **Transparencies 31a and 31b—Raoul**
  These transparencies show a sixth grade student's development from a very reluctant, repetitive writer. At the beginning of the year, Raoul wrote essentially the same thing every day (October and November). The teacher continued to write to him and to vary her entry each day. Late in the year her patience paid off, and they were able to work out a problem together (January) and then to have genuine discussions about his activities (June). See the handbook, p. 69, "Writing With the Reluctant Writer," for further discussion of this example.

- The student who can't think of anything to write about

- Entries that you don't understand
  **Transparency 32—Su Kyong and Michael**
  This transparency shows that although the teacher may not be able to understand much of a student's entry, he or she can pick up on what little can be deciphered to write a reply (Su Kyong). If it seems appropriate, the teacher can also request clarification (Michael).

- The student who is angry

- Behavioral problems.

## 10. Written Response to Student Entries

[SUGGESTED ACTIVITY—20 MINUTES FOR WRITING AND DISCUSSION]

We have given prominence to this activity rather than embedding it within another section because it is the only activity that seems essential. To ensure that participants are well on their way to engaging in written dialogue with their students, participants must have time during the workshop to practice with actual student entries and discuss their responses with each other. Nine student entries are provided for that purpose:

- Three from primary students (grades 1 and 2)

- Three from upper elementary students (grades 4–6)

- Three from high school students (grades 9–12).

Three is a good number of entries to work with. You can choose the entries from among **Samples 1–9,** depending on the students the workshop participants are working with, or you can use entries from your own students if you have their permission. The entries are given here in two forms—a "sample" copy with only the student's entry and a "response" copy that includes the response of the student's teacher. You can use these samples in a variety of ways, including the following:

1. Give workshop participants *paper copies* of three samples of student writing that are appropriate for their teaching situations—three primary, three elementary, three high school, or a mixture. Have them take about 10 minutes to respond individually in writing. Then show a *transparency* of the response copy with the original teacher's response covered and discuss the entry and various participants' responses. Afterwards, reveal and discuss the original teacher's response.

2. Instead of passing out paper copies of the students' writing, *do the entire activity with transparencies.* Show and discuss the students' entries (with the teacher responses covered), have participants write responses on a piece of paper, dis-

cuss their responses, and reveal the original response.

### Primary Samples

(from first grade students)

**Sample 1** shows an entry of a beginning writer, who primarily drew and copied words she had seen in the room and occasionally asked for help with spelling a word not in the room.

**Sample 2** shows an entry of a student who was writing independently, using invented spelling. Her entry says, "I am happy with my crayons and my pencil. Today I am using my pencil and my crayons."

**Sample 3** shows a student who is writing extended texts with nearly standard spelling. In her response, the teacher names the topic that the student was writing about but neglected to mention—a party.

The related transparencies, with teacher responses, are **Responses 1, 2, and 3.**

### Upper Elementary Samples

(from sixth grade students)

**Sample 4** shows a discussion of an academic topic.

**Sample 5** comes from a student who had had no previous schooling and was just beginning to write. No teacher response is available.

**Sample 6** comes from a student whose entries are very difficult to decipher. It says, "Laura and me are going to sit together, but she is mad at Rickie and she cries a little bit because Rickie is really mean to me and Laura and everybody in the room. Laura told me to tell you to tell her to stop bothering her. Thank you Mrs. Reed. Rickie was hitting Laura and she said that your country is very ugly and she was crying a little bit. Rickie is hitting everybody and she doesn't let me work and Laura thought she is so stupid, and that's what Laura said to me."

The related transparencies, in two of the three cases with teacher responses, are **Responses 4, 5, and 6.**

### High School Samples

(from students in 10th through 12th grades)

**Sample 7** shows a teacher and student working together on a problem the student is having.

**Sample 8** shows a discussion of a student's school work. In her answer, the teacher focuses Ta Hoan's attention on what is significant about Zenger's role in American history without doing the work for him.

**Sample 9** shows a complaint.

The related transparencies, with teacher responses, are **Responses 7, 8, and 9.**

### Alternate Activity

[WRITING, 10–15 MINUTES; DISCUSSION, 10 MINUTES]

As an alternative to just responding to student entries as a teacher might, you can give two different student entries from the same level (e.g., 1 and 2 or 4 and 5) to pairs of participants. Each member of the pair first responds to one of the student entries as a teacher might, then they exchange papers and each responds to the teacher entry as they imagine that student might. Partners can then discuss with each other their reactions and feelings as they become student respondents to a teacher response.

Completing the student-teacher-student interaction pattern is especially helpful in bringing to the surface problems that can occur if teachers ask too many questions in a row. It also reassures participants that they can respond adequately as they see how a peer performs under the same constraints.

## 11. Discussion and Questions

[10 MINUTES]

Participants might be asking questions throughout the workshop, but you should still set aside time at the end for more questions and discussion. As with activities discussed above, large groups might first break into pairs or small groups to generate a list of questions to share with the whole group.

**References**

Bruner, J. (1966). *Toward a theory of instruction*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Peyton, J. K., & Reed, L. (1990). Dialogue journal writing with limited English proficient students: A handbook for teachers. Alexandria, VA: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

# 4 Overhead Transparencies



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# Dialogue Journal Workshop

- Characteristics of dialogue journal writing
- Settings in which dialogue journal writing can be used
- Benefits of dialogue journal writing to students and teachers
- Results of research on dialogue journal use
- Guidelines for getting started
- Strategies for maintaining the dialogue
- Possible problems and suggestions for addressing them
- Written response to student entries
- Discussion and questions

## Characteristics of Dialogue Journal Writing

- A written interaction between a teacher and students
- Done regularly throughout the school year
- Student generated
- Functional
- Interactive
- Shares the qualities of oral conversation and written text

# Michael Burmese Sixth Grade

*February 9*

**Michael:** You know on this week like the silly week. I don't know what happen on this week. What did you mean about the valentines you said we have to bring the valentines. Did we have to made the valentines for people in our classroom? I dint know what you are talking.

**Teacher:** No, we don't have to send anyone a valentine. It is just a fun thing to do. Sometimes we like someone but we do not tell them. We feel funny telling someone we really like them. Giving a valentine is an easy way of doing it. If you want to give a valentine or fifty valentines, it doesn't matter—you do what you want about that.

*February 10*

**Michael:** I know what is the valentine but I don't know what I have to do and the valentine is, we have to give the cards to someone, and I have to buy the card, but I can't buy the cards thats is the problems. I think I'm not going to play softball because I did not do nothing about it, and Ricardo says I could be the catcher and he break his promise.

**Teacher:** No problem! Anyone who wants to give valentines can. If you don't want to give valentines you don't have to. Talk to Ricardo again. I'm sure he forgot his promise when others on the team begam yelling. Did you ever find your pen?

*February 11*

**Michael:** I didn't find my pen. Happy Valentine! I want to give the cards to people but I can't give the cards to people. I give the one cards to the simon. I think Level 10 hard for me. Did you think Level 10 hard for me? I saw the Thanksgiving Pilgrim in the book. You know, today morning U Chal put cards in every bag except Tony I know why U Chal put the cards every card because he put cards into every bag so that he margar him. You said we are going to do the art with the shoe box, and you said you don't have the shoe box you can't do art.

**Teacher:** I am not sure what you said. U Chal put cards in everyone's sack so they don't *margar* him? What word did you put there? Please tell me. Yes,we will do the shoebox art. Everyone who has a shoebox will do it. Have a happy vacation. I will see you in five days.

**Edwin:** Yesterday I watched a news about the Contras in Nicaragua. It was a very interesting news. It said that the only country that can stop that revolution in Nicaragua and in the other Central American countries is the United States. It said that the other countries such as El Salvador, Honduras are in war because of Nicaragua. It said if the United States would bring peace to Nicaragua all the other countries such as El Salvador and Honduras would be in peace too. In the news said the United States don't want more yonger to died.

**Teacher:** I was interested in your comments about the war in Nicaragua. . . . I think the U.S. will become more and more involved in the civil wars in Central America, and we will be hated by some of those countries for being there. Then, if we are very much involved, we will be hated by others if we try to leave. That is more or less what happened in Vietnam. On the other hand, Vietnam was on the other side of the world, and Central America is right here in the Western Hemisphere and close to the Panama Canal, which is vital to the U.S. I truly don't know what we should do, but I see it as very difficult for us to bring peace to those countries. How can we avoid getting into the wars ourselves?

**Edwin:** I think that many countries get into wars just because of nothing, but other countries have enough reason to get into them. Many countries can avoid getting into the wars if they are more friendly and if they are peaceful countries. The United States is a friendly and peaceful country, but the United States always want to help other countries in anything she can and I think it is very nice of her. I guess what the United States want is to bring peace to all the countries in the World but that's impossible.

March 10
On Friday I take
The Gingerbread Man
hom I read IT alot
and My Brother
read IT TOO

Tomorrow please write
about California. Will you
go on an airplane or drive your car?

March 12
I will go on a airplane
and I will buy food
TO eat When IT Is Time
TO eat I Will eat My food
and at California IT
have Swimming pool

Will you live at the
same place you lived last
time you were in California?
I hope your family will
come back to Arlington some
day. But I can understand if
you want to live in California.
The weather is so much nicer
there.

March 13
yes I will Live there agon yesterday I didnot told you Iat California Where I Live IT have Chucky Cheese

I hope Chucky Cheese is still there. We had a Chucky Cheese in Arlington that closed.

What video game did you like best at Chucky Cheese?

March 16
I Like pop Man and racing car The best
Do you Like pop Man?
are you Like racing Car?

The only video game I ever played was Pac Man. I liked it but I was not very good at it.

Do you hare to pay 25¢ for video games? I don't like to pay my money for them.

today is funny day and my
cry day  Dad please me too
good english" please phase Dad
I'm cry boy and dumb boy
I'm sorry teacher
and I'm a dumb student
I'm sorry sorry teacher

Oh! No! Your are not a dumb student! You are smart! Everyday you learn more. I am so happy because you learn everyday.

Yes, we sang songs today. They are Christmas songs.

You work hard! You are doing well!

Thanks teacher
sorry me too happy



today booktime is I'm cly Steve and Michaer on account of I'm big me bad boy I don't me too why I don't dumb boys I'm not happy go back my country Korea please Dad" I don't english not tell "oh no" and I'm 바보. 벙신, 개새끼. I'm not happy

Please tell me when Steve or anyone bite you. No one is to bit at our school. We learn to be kind to each one. You may come to Room 11 when you need me.

I want you to stay in our Country. You are a fine boy. You will learn English.

thanks

**Tuyet:** I have thinking about 3 day. If I don't go to special class I won't be able to know alot of about math . . . if I stay . . . I think they don't like me cause am not their friend and they smarter more than I do, do you think so? I can't get which choice am I going to get, would you help me with all that problem?

I wish my mother was born me as a boy. I can't do any thing just exactly like other boy does because the girl can't play a lot of game. For example if the girl name A and other girl name B and they don't like each other so they are going tell other girl don't play with that girl she is bad but the boy doesn't like that and that is one reason I like to be a boy.

March 3

today math time
lesd bada me abeb
time ths way d
wnot takeidg to
her

Mar. 3

If ~~Luci~~ Lucia bothers you ask
Ms. Sills to move your seat. You need
to pay attention in math with
no one to bother you.

Bring a note telling why
you were absent, please.

**Maria:** Today is Monday the first day of the school. Well I don't feel so good today. I have a heathed [headache]. I thing is because of the cold but sometimes I get headethe I don't know why when I reading. That why I don't like to read because it make me feel bad. That why I want to finish school to because maybe then I not going to have that.

**Teacher:** Have you ever had your eyes checked? When I was your age I used to ge headaches when I read a lot. I could see all right, but my eyes would just get tired. I got glasses for reading then. I didn't have to wear them all the time like I do now. They really helped me out!

**Teacher:** Your black eye hurt. I could tell because you kept touching it. Do you think being hit by Willie was fun? Could you laugh when he calls you a name instead of fighting? What will you do in Junior High if the big boys find out you get so angry you fight when someone calls you a name? Do you think they will stop calling you names or call you names all of the time so they can see you get so angry you fight?

**Michael:** My black eyes is no so hurt just little. It is not fun to fight with Willie. They call me name I don't care. I know Mrs. Reed if I go to the Junior high School the big boy is going to call me every name but the important things I have to remeber is don't fight them back or don't tell them nothing and just go home or something.

**Teacher:** Good! Remember it is so easy to say that you won't fight when they call you names, but when they call you names how will you feel? Will you get so angry that you will forget about your plan?

**Michael:** I try to don't fight them back Mrs. Reed. I know they call me name I feel like angry or mad.

* * * *

**Teacher:** Today at noon, you had some trouble. Did you think about it so it will not happen again? Bad language is not for good thoughts!

**Michael:** I know I was saying the bad language. I will stop saying the bad language. I know why I get in trouble and I don't go out play I don't get trouble so I won't go out and play.

**Teacher:** It is good for you to be out playing. It is very good for you to learn to control your temper and your tongue.

**Teacher:** I know that you are not usually a noisy girl, Maria, nor is Pilar. The problem is that there are many others in the class that play around. The two of you have to remember that you can't do it too! Try to listen and answer questions in class. If you get involved in the lesson, you will learn a lot more.

Fri Dec, 12

Mrs Reed in the story of Yoko's grandmother I don't understand what man ~~~~ the mouse is the most powerful being in the world?

Fri., Dec. 12

In our story the Mouse was looking for the most powerful being to marry his daughter. He looked and looked. He, at last, learned that mice are powerful! They can do things that the sun, the clouds, the wind and the wall can not do. Yoko's Grandmother told the story to show that we do not need to go looking for something more powerful. Each one of us has power. We need to use it.

**U Chal:** Last year in Brazil my science teacher say even if the atoms of some thing are the same atoms of other thing but one is different of other because the atoms are in the diffrent places.

Can the man cut the atom in two parts? If the atoms are made wit things small then the atoms why they stay saying the atoms the small thing in the world? What the thing small then the atoms is made? What a atom of Uranium can do?

**Teacher:** If the atom is cut or smashed we get a mighty release of energy—which is very dangerous unless it is very controlled. We are learning more about the atom. The atom is the smallest unit of matter. That tiny unit has parts to it that don't separate naturally. We use uranium atoms in our nuclear power plants.

**U Chal:** Does we go to study more abot atoms? Last year I did a expirement to separet the water to hydrogin and oxgine, the class divide in 5 group and only one group separet the water.

**Teacher:** Yes! We will learn more about elements. How did you separate hydrogen from the water molecule?

**U Chal:** . . . I know and I read that scientist was stunding about dolphins language. Last year when I was in Brazil I was in the beach and I saw a dolphin dead on the sand and when I touch the skin is like sofet and then when I eat the lunch and I go to see the dolphin some birds was eating the dolphin.

**Teacher:** The dolphins have even been trained to do undersea work for the Navy. They seem to have an intelligence. The birds help to clean the beach, by eating the dead animals. The dolphin's skin has no scales—we expect an animal that looks like a fish to have scales. . . .

* * * *

**Su Kyong:** today I looke the jernol is doly if I do the now jernol and if this jernol is doly my har is not clyn if I do the now jernol I dont woont doly jernol and today morning sandra is mad me oumus shes borsday I have to got the pijons is her borsday

**Teacher:** Can you make a big, big birthday card for Sandra's birthday? She would like that.

I see your word list in your journal. I am happy you are studying it.

If you keep writing you will get a new journal.

## Teacher Modifications

One day when an owl was in the news several students mentioned the owl in their entry for that day. Here are responses to four different students, written to challenge or promote thought at different levels.

**To Jay:** The owl's picture and story were fun to see. Do you think the owl is wise?

**To Samantha:** I've heard people say, "He's as wise as an owl!" I wonder why people say that? Did you think this owl was wise?

**To Stella:** How do you think the author felt about the owl in that story? Did he write about the owl as though it had human or bird characteristics?

**To Willie:** Which of the characteristics of the owl were anthropomorphic and which were avian? Do you think the owl did remember? Is that avian?

# Teacher Modeling

*Kemmy*

**Kemmy:** today we spelling
I like Mrs. V____
today Mrs. V____ tell play is good and Mrs. W____ he tell Kemmy spelling is good Andy He Spelling good *Mrs. Reed I Like Andy and I Like Sompob*

**Teacher:** Good! Sompob and Andy are good friends. Kemmy is Sompob's friend, too. Kemmy is Andy's friend, too. Is Khansome Kemmy's friend?

**Kemmy:** Sompob and Andy and Khansome is good frieds . . .

* * * *

*Michael*

**Michael:** Mrs. Reed today morning you said this is *my lovely friends* right? She told me about book story name is "the lady first in the air." She tell me *this lady* was first in the air, and she is flying in Pacific ocean, and she lose it everybody find her but *they can't find it. They loocked in the ocean still not here.* Did she know everything of book?

**Teacher:** *My lovely friend Mrs. P* reads a lot. She has read the book about *Amelia Earhart.* It is a good story and it is a true story. *They looked and looked but they never found her airplane or her.*

* * * *

*Andy*

**Andy:** today morning is picture I don't teacher is help me. thanks teacher. the present you picture. you is happy me is delighted "thank teacher" today tree is flowerpot change good change
and today is Miss V____ vicariousness
Miss P____ come

**Teacher:** Yes, I was happy to help you this morning with your work. The picture you made of me is very good. Thank you I like it! You put your cutting into a flower pot because it has roots on it. It is ready to grow.
Miss V____ is sick. I hope she will come on Monday.
Miss P____ is a good friend. Did she help your reading group?

February 3

Today I forgot
To bring My

Yur Slip Slip

Please try to remember
your field trip slip
tomorrow. We're going
on a great field trip.

Fedruary 9

when we po to

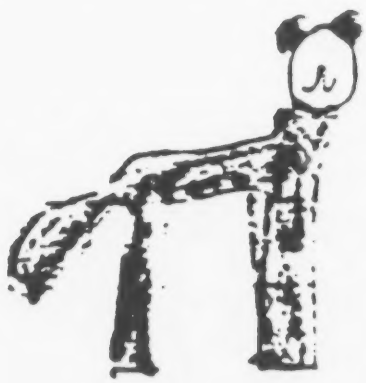
the field triP AND

when we went
to the maze I
Sroi to pod lost
dot I Kdat gadt
lost

october 6

purple

black brown



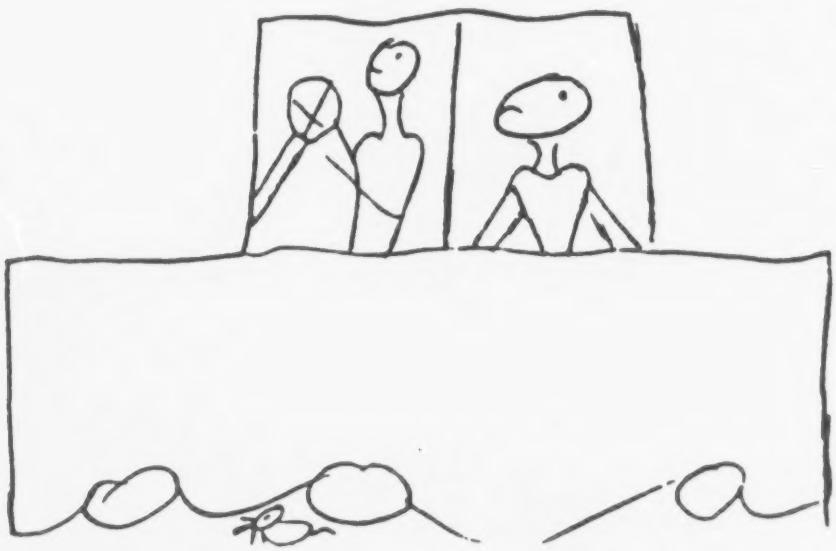
Do you have a dog or a cat?

Yes or (No)

March 24

thes mone I look at a car hit a cat the litte cat die

That is so sad. Did you cry when the car hit the cat? I know I would have cried— The poor little cat.



# Ruqqaya

*September*

I like to fly.
I like school.
I like to play.
I don't lik fish.
I like this day.

*May*

today I was the all most the winner but I just miss the word. So the Sonia was the winner. I'm still very happy that she wan and in the aqua [reading] group their was too winner one was Rofina how was the winner and one was Nhumg how was the winner.

# Development of Grammatical Structures

*October 3*

Mrs. Reed, Today I *go* to math class Mrs. G *give* test so I *mest* 3 and ½ not finish becuse time *is* up. I mean she *give* the 5. So I *finish* 1½. She *give* the math test *is* easy Mrs. Reed.

*May 14*

Yesterday I *want* home my mother *told* me to study the Language that you *gave* me to study I *did study* it.

# Diego

*September*

On Saturday I went to Fishing with my frends to the Potomac river. And cooking fish and meat. At night when I went to sleep I felt so tire that I went to sleep faster. On Sunday I whent to play soccer oll day long. In the mornoing whent the alarm clock ring I din'n know how I truend it iff and I all most miss the bus in the morning.

*April*

On friday I was lifting weoigt when the Foot ball coach arrive and tell me "I all way see you here workin hart. Sincce you have an extrong body why don't you play foot ball theis year." he took me where they were in practice. he told me sit here and watch. If you like to play tell me after we finish. When they were finish I told him that I would like to be in the team. To day will be my first practice in the team. So please wish me luck!!

Nov. 18

Today We selLing.
Today We science.
Today We orang good.

Kemmy is spelling 10 words.
Today Kemmy looked at two beans. Kemmy saw a little plant!
Kemmy likes oranges! Do you like apples, Kemmy?

Nov 19

I dan'T understand Selling.
Today We Fish good.
Today we milK Good.
I don't Know Selling.
I one go TO School Good Selling.
mrs Reed I one go To School Good selLing.

You will understand spelling.
You spelled fish and milk.

Sept 22

What are we learning.

Tody what P.E is.

I like play Baeball.

Next week P.E is what.

We are learning of the the longitude and latitude of our woreld. We are learning about Valcanoes. Today we looked at some lava. Did you see the rock float?

Today we were going to play relay race for P. E.

I don't know what next

week's P.E. area will be.

Sept. 23

What is a Geography, and Science, I don't understand Mrs. Reed, we live in the North American or South America. Mrs. Reed look at Newspaper they are mat or what happen.

Geography is the study of our earth. It's found the continents and the oceans.

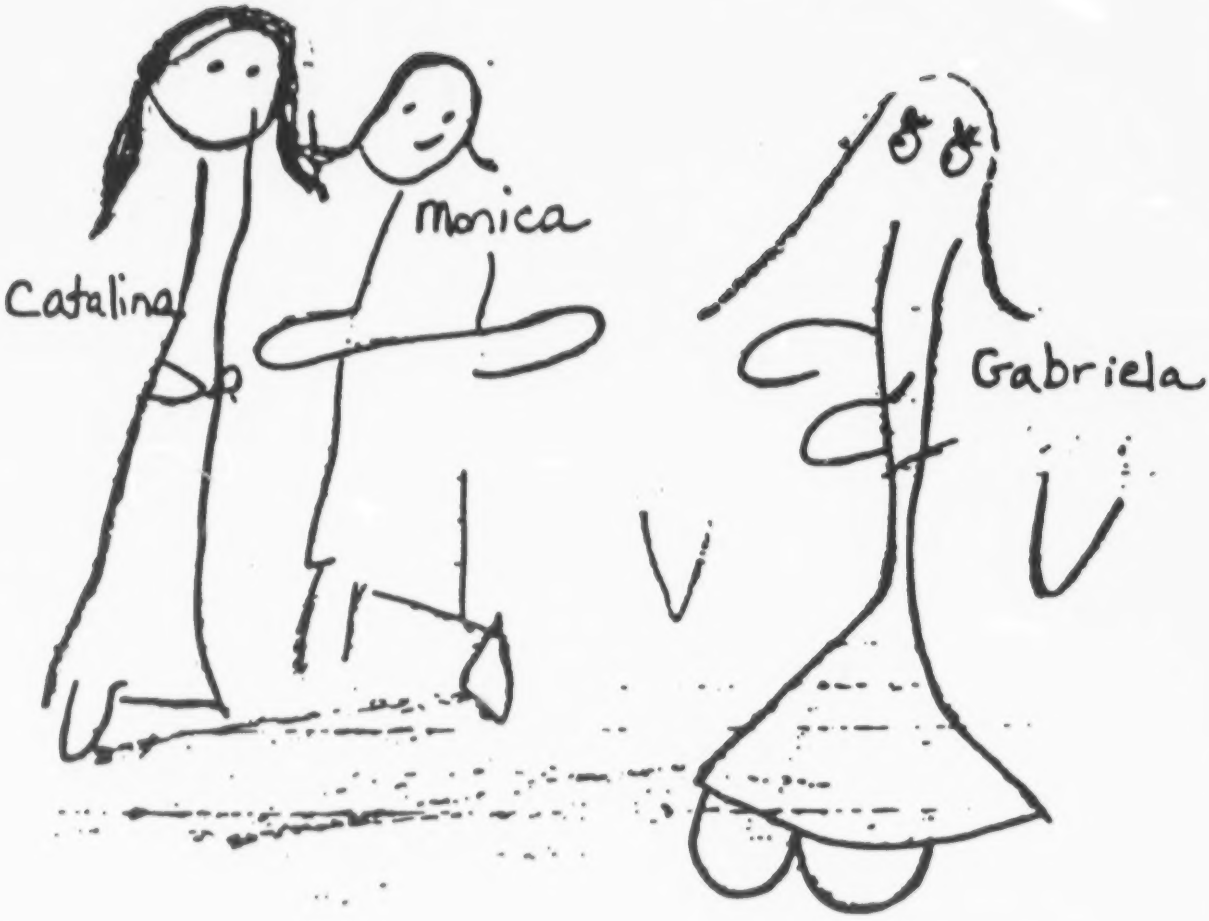
Scienci is the study of things that change because of something. The volcano changes our earth because the core and magna push out.

It's live in North America.

Which newspaper are you

November 5

clock



october 2

What is the girl doing?

Is she jumping?

**Andy:** today in the morning is stair is fall
tuesday is man pilgrim make be interesnt and
(my) pilgrim is school corridor exhibit me is
delighted. and. me is happy. som pob is every
day be ill tempered khansomne and me is love
no I
som pob is be ill tempered Nevertheless som
pob is me friend and
khansomne is too friend
nevertheless no girl friend
and today is my watch is be out of order
ow no
w
w
w

* * * *

**Andy:** Yesterday you not come to school.
I'm feel anxiety.
I'm happy today come to school is you (Miss
Reed)
I'm happy happy
Yesterday teacher is I don't like.
You first and Mrs. C. better.
Yesterday teacher is too good and you and Mrs.
C is better
yesterday Miss V. not lesen to me. . . .

Transparencies 4–31

*September*

**Ray:** Today was a good day I am glad I havent got my mane up on the bourd yet I hope never will I will try to be good so I can pass and get aces (A's) I my reaport card I my reaport card has aces me and my mon and my big brothers will be happy thay will be verry happy i think i am goin to have a good day today and tomorow and allweas have a good day *Ms Smith or MsMcRay who ever reads it.* (Emphasis added)

*November*

**Ray:** Dear Ms. Smith I do read. I like Harriat the spy book its allright. You have a lot of word don't you get tired off allot of work I do sometimes. beacuse Its a lot but you dont give allot? You give me inoff. and I like the work you give me yesterday when I was going to sleep I thot of school today and I thot of you and I thot maybe you wold be lonly and scared somting mite happen to you, and i hope nothing happens to you. do you have eny wepons to protect you.

From Edelsky, C., Draper, K., & Smith, K. (1983). Hook'em at the start of school in a "whole language classroom." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 14*(4), 257–281.

**Ben:** [The teacher has mentioned the shooting of President Reagan, which was in the news at the time.]

I feel sorry too for all the happenings that happen in this country. You know that it is the eight time that that happened. The first three was along time ago. It was somewhere Lincoln's time. It's too bad that there's some crazy people here in our country. At first they thought that they didn't shot him but he did. I am so glad that the president today are alive and also the secret service man. Also the Washington D.C. policeman and Jim Brady the secretary. Mr. Brady is the worst person that got hit. . . .

**Teacher:** . . . I am so thankful 3 of the men are recovering so well! I am praying for Mr. Brady and for the killer and his family. Can you imagine how sad they must feel?

**Ben:** Yes, I can imagine how Mr. Brady's family feel. Today I listened to the news again and I just found out that President Reagan didn't know that there were three more man that been shot, at least thats what they said. When they found out that Ronald Reagan has been shot they thought it was only a joke, but it wasn't. I hope he recovers fast. I wish we don't have any crazy people in here (in our country). They said that the murder (John Hinkley Jr.) when he was in some kind of a club he always wanted to vandalize or something like that. He always wanted to get into trouble. Too bad he had to do somelthing crazy. The parents of John Hinkley could have brought him to a psysichatris. The parents of Hinkley Jr. are rich so why didn't they brought him to a physicology they could afford anything they wanted.

# Summary of Dialogue Journal Research Findings

*Dialogue journals:*

- Provide individualized opportunities for students to engage in intelligent discourse, adapted to their linguistic, cognitive, and emotional levels (Staton, 1984; Peyton & Seyoum, 1989).
- Facilitate acquisition of higher-order language functions and structures of reason, for both native English speakers and students learning English as a second language (Shuy, 1988, 1992; Staton, 1988).
- Provide movement from context-dependent to context-independent expression in writing, paralleling oral language development (Peyton, 1988, 1990; Staton, 1985).
- Give students substantial opportunities for reading development by providing texts at an individualized and continuously more demanding level. This is especially helpful for students with low reading levels (Staton, 1986).
- Provide multiple opportunities for the kind of complex language use that is valued in more formal writing and higher-order cognition tasks in schools (Peyton, 1988; Peyton, Staton, Richardson, & Wolfram, 1990).
- Have demonstrated their capacity to motivate both students and teachers to engage in meaningful, thoughtful written interactions, overcoming the reluctance of many students from limited-literacy environments to write, and the "burnout" of many teachers struggling to teach such children (Hayes & Bahruth, 1985; Staton, Shuy, Peyton, & Reed, 1988).

**Elizabeth:** What would you do if someone you knew was running away. They had the money to go to San Francisco or San Diego. They had about $1,000. You had already tried to convince them to stay but they were still going to. Would you tell their parents? What would you do?

**Teacher:** That is a serious problem. Have you discussed it with your mother? If she knows the people involved she may have an idea. If it is someone here at school, someone your Mother doesn't know well, you would be wise to tell Mrs. F___. Running away is an extremely dangerous thing to do. I hope you see that they get help.

**Elizabeth:** The only thing is, I don't want her to hate me afterward. Actually its 2 girls that are running away. Yesterday she stayed after school and I tried to talk her out of it. She kept on saying "My parents have ruined my life."

**Teacher:** I am very concerned about the girls' running away. If you still feel they are about to do that kind of thing, would you want me to either talk to them or to call their parents? Would you like me to ask Mrs. F___ to speak to them? I do feel we *must* do something if they are determined to take this kind of action.

**Elizabeth:** It's Ellen that's running away. Has Dena already told you? What are you going to do?

**Teacher:** Yes, I know who it is and am pleased because I really think I may be able to help. I won't ever tell what I know or who told me. I will begin at once to see what I can do.

*October*

**Raoul:** I hope we have a nice day today Mrs. reed and I hope we have P.E. and I hope we have a nice ricese and a nice lunchtime and a good playtime.

*November*

**Raoul:** I wish we have a good day and I hope we have a good lunch time today and recess time I hope theres no trouble today.

**Teacher:** You were very angry with me this morning. You are not at school to play—even art is a way to learn. We measured and used a ruler to help us learn.

**Raoul:** I hope we have a good day today a good recess a good lunch time and a good playtime. I hope we wont get in any trouble.

**Teacher:** I am sorry you wrote this and did not keep your journal with you. You could help me so much if you would tell me in your journal why you are having trouble. I would like to make school easier for you by helping to solve some problems.

**Raoul:** I hope we have a nice day today and a good recess time and a good lunch time. . . .

*January*

**Raoul:** . . . you know why I don't want to go to Virgil becaus I had three girl friends there and they thought I was going to King J.H. and if they see me they are going to be very mad. I hope I don't have to go with you.

**Teacher:** No! I did not now that you had told anyone that you were in Junior High. I'm glad you told me. I understand the problem. If they saw you with the 6th graders they would know you had been giving them a line! I will see what I can arrange.

**Raoul:** Thanks a lot I really apprisiated. If I don't go were am I staying will you tell me please. . . . I hope you guys have a good time at Virgil thats too bad I can't go.

*June*

**Teacher:** Are your parents going to come to your promotion?

**Raoul:** No my parents arent going to come. some of my home boys are going to come because you don't know what may happen.

**Teacher:** What do you mean by "you don't know what may happen?" We've been doing this for years and nothing happens! We all have a good time and you get your promotion after the ceremony. So if anything happens during the ceremony you may not get your promotion. I'm glad your friends want to come—but they can cause you a problem, too.

**Raoul:** No they wont theire already vets they have babies they wont start nothing. only if some one comes up to them. there just going to site down and watch.

**Su Kyong:** today I cume sckool raening pikyul so nayse sunday i go japanyes towm so clan day got so lal thing Im doing big thlay town plas pepil is dong by thly pepl I going chlch ably sunday so peple to like go to the chlch I like see the amarca amare today I can do not thong I don wat can I do my had is sik math time I like the story math room I can reed I have to stay in the room I like go to my room. My had is hord litle nax to wag we are 5 days dot come to shool I want to go to the some sume time s I hayto sk lm litle skull and

**Teacher:** I am glad you are back. I missed you so much. I like to go to Japanese Town, too. Did you eat there? I hope your head does not hurt. I miss you. At noon I had a meeting and I could not let boys and girls come in. You can come in on Tuesday noon.

* * * *

**Michael:** . . . I want to give the cards to people but I can't give the cards to people. I give the one cards to the simon. . . . You know today morning U Chal put cards into every bag except Tony I know why U Chal put the cards every cards becuse he put into every bag so they don't margar him. . . .

**Teacher:** I am not sure what you said. U Chal put cards in everyone's sack so they don't *margar* him? What word did you put there? Please tell me.

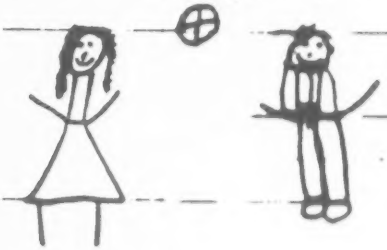
# 5. Sample Student Entries and Sample Teacher Responses



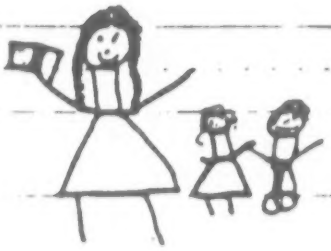
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

October 2.

play



read



eat

March 23
I am ape Waf
am Crayons an am
psow today I am
yousn am. psow
an am Crayons

May 28

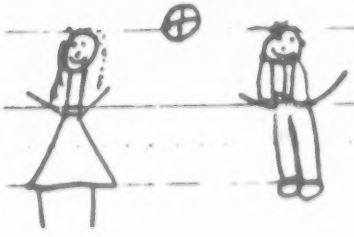
I play and eat

I had a cake because my MoM and Bob We all are Makeing a cake for my MoMs

Find my room was with balloon That was a happy thing

October 2

play



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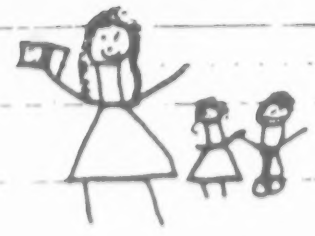

eat

Do you read books at your house? What books do you like to read?

March 23

I am ape Waf
am Crayons an am
psow today I am
yousn am psow
an am Crayons

I am happy with your writing I can't believe it. You can write many, many words.

Please don't lose your crayons. Do you hare a box to put them in?

May 28

I play and eat

I had a cake because my MoM and bob We all are Making a cake for my MoMs Find my room was with balloon ThaT was a happy thing.

You must hare had a party for your Mom's friend. Did

you surprise her?

I hope your mom wasn't angry about your sweatshirt. I was surprised that Catalina did that.

# U Chal Korea Sixth Grade

**U Chal:** Yes, I like to make reports if fun to make and at the same time we learn more about life in the ocean.

I am doing the report about White Sharks then when I finish I am going to do about Dophins if I have time.

I Brazil they only use Celsius they have Fahrenheit but they use Celsius to see the temperature to cook and the doctors use only Celsius to see the body temperature.

**Teacher:** You know Celsius better than Fahrenheit temperatures, then, don't you? We are going to be doing some thermometer reading here in the room. We'll use both scales.

Dolphins or porpoises are unique mammals. They seem to have a language.

**U Chal:** I never read about Fahrenheit until I come to U.S., the first time I come I saw a film of doctor and they find that 1 monkey had a fever and when he got the fever his body temperature was 115 F but I thoughth they was talking about 115 C but now I know the different of Celsius and Fahrenheit.

I know and I read that scientist was stunding about dolphins language. Last year when I was in Brazil I was in the beach and I saw a dophin dead on the sand and when I touch the skin is like sofet and then when I eat the lunch and I go to see the dolphin some birds was eating the dolphin.

# Phimporn Laos Sixth Grade

I like Room 11. My name is PHinPorn
I like To look at books. My Teacher is MRS Reed.
I like you Mrs. Reed. I like the boxes. I like to write
I like the duck.
a b c d e e g h i j K l m n o P q R S T u
v W X Y Z 1 2 3 4 5 A B C D E F G H i d K L
M N O P Q R S T U v W x y z 6 7 8 9 10
I am you are SHe is IT is THe and we are
this is a book NO iT is not 2
that is a Pen NO iT is not 3
what is that? that is a dog, 4.
metre meter centi... a ...
diatomd liquid weight millecente
ded Eng. Le...

## Maria Mexico Sixth Grade

**Maria:** lra and me are go to set to geter but some she is mad with rikee and she cris alet bit bcs rikee is reell men to me and lra and evy bity the room. lra toll me to tell you to tell her to stop bothin her. thek you ms. reed. rikee was hteg lura and she seed that you cotry is ver agly and she was cring altilbit rikee is hetag evey bity and she dot lit me work and lowra thot she was so stopet and that wat laura sist to me.

# U Chal Korea Sixth Grade

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**U Chal:** I never read about Fahrenheit until I come to U.S., the first time I come I saw a film of doctor and they find that 1 monkey had a fever and when he got the fever his body temperature was 115 F but I thoughth they was talking about 115 C but now I know the different of Celsius and Fahrenheit.

I know and I read that scientist was stunding about dolphins language. Last year when I was in Brazil I was in the beach and I saw a dophin dead on the sand and when I touch the skin is like sofet and then when I eat the lunch and I go to see the dolphin some birds was eating the dolphin.

**Teacher:** The dolphins have even been trained to do undersea work for the Navy. They seem to have an intelligence. The birds help to clean the beach by eating the dead animals. The dolphin's skin has no scales—we expect an animal that looks like a fish to have scales.

Do you like doing reports? Our class seems to be deeply involved.

Have you had a chance to talk to Mrs. P?

I like room 11. My name is P.Hin Parn
I like To look at books. My Teacher is MRS Reed.
I like you Mrs. Reed. I like the boxes. I like to write
I like the duck.
a b c d e e g h i j K l m n o P q r S T u
v W X Y Z 1 2 3 4 5 A B c D E F G H i d K L
M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z 6 7 8 9 10
I am you are SHe is IT is THe and we are
this is a book NO iT is not 2
that is a Pen NO iT is not 3
what is that? that is a dog, 4.
metre meter centimeter
distance liquid weight millecente
died England in imPregs

## Maria Mexico Sixth Grade

**Maria:** lra and me are go to set to geter but some she is mad with rikee and she cris alet bit bcs rikee is reell men to me and lra and evy bity the room. lra toll me to tell you to tell her to stop bothin her. thek you ms. reed. rikee was hteg lura and she seed that you cotry is ver agly and she was cring altilbit rikee is hetag evey bity and she dot lit me work and lowra thot she was so stopet and that wat laura sist to me.

**Teacher:** Rickie is a nice girl and she feels no one likes her. She does not speak English very well and it is hard to talk if you don't speak English so well. She feels so lonely—she needs you to be her friend. You are nice to her, and she needs someone to be nice to her.

## Juan El Salvador 10th Grade

**Juan:** I will like very much to play in the school team of basketball. I will try come to play after school. The problem is I don't what to do for to bee part of a school team. I like to play basketball very much. In my country I played for my school team and I was a good player and I wish to play here too.

**Teacher:** Mr. B is the regular basketball coach. Do you know him? He is one of the counselors and an awfully nice person. If you are interested in basketball, he could tell you about the teams at school and how to try out.

**Juan:** I went to talk to Mr. B and he told me it is to late for to be in the team. I felt so sad and I steal sad. I would liked to play for the school, but the things are different. My friends told me the coach is very straight and he does a descrimination to the spanish people or chanes [Chinese]. I thought that is very bad because that make feel bad.

## Ta Hoan 11th Grade Vietnam

**Ta Hoan:** Today in my History class I have to do my report. My report talk about a person. His name was "John Peter Zenger," my report will finich Tuesday next week. However, I never hear his name before. I little bit nervous about that. Because my teacher give me a short time to do my report. I think I have to try to finich my report before Tuesday next week.

## Ravi India 12th Grade

**Ravi:** Today is Wednesday the 10th who is that teacher anyway I hate that teacher why does she always come in our class. I am sick and tired of school. I don't know why because they don't have a cooler in our school. It is always hot in this school. Sometimes I think of quitting the school. I think that the school is boring. Mrs. B why is it very hot in this school. I hate hot wether any way.

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**Teacher:** Mr. B is the regular basketball coach. Do you know him? He is one of the counselors and an awfully nice person. If you are interested in basketball, he could tell you about the teams at school and how to try out.

**Juan:** I went to talk to Mr. B and he told me it is to late for to be in the team. I felt so sad and I steal sad. I would liked to play for the school, but the things are different. My friends told me the coach is very straight and he does a descrimination to the spanish people or chanes [Chinese]. I thought that is very bad because that make feel bad.

**Teacher:** I'm puzzled by this. I know Mr. B. very well, and I've seen him really work hard to help some of the Spanish-speaking students he has as a counselor. There are several Spanish speaking students on the team. I think you missed the deadline for tryouts. Why don't you ask some of the other students when the deadline for tryouts was to see if you really did miss it? Then next year, you can make sure that you try out for the team in time.

## Ta Hoan Vietnam 11th Grade

**Ta Hoan:** Today in my History class I have to do my report. My report talk about a person. His name was "John Peter Zenger," my report will finich Tuesday next week. However, I never hear his name before. I little bit nervous about that. Because my teacher give me a short time to do my report. I think I have to try to finich my report before Tuesday next week.

**Teacher:** You are probably working very hard on your report now. John Peter Zenger was a very important newspaper man. In the U. S. we have freedom of the press, and he was one of the Americans responsible for this. I hope your report goes well!!

## Ravi India 12th Grade

**Ravi:** Today is Wednesday the 10th who is that teacher anyway I hate that teacher why does she always come in our class. I am sick and tired of school. I don't know why because they don't have a cooler in our school. It is always hot in this school. Sometimes I think of quitting the school. I think that the school is boring. Mrs. B why is it very hot in this school. I hate hot wether any way.

**Teacher:** It can get hot in my room or Dr. G's room or Mrs. S's because we don't have any windows, and the air doesn't circulate well through the room. When the heat is on on a cold day or the air conditioning is on on a hot day, the room is all right. However, when the weather is good and no heat or air conditioning are needed in the school, these rooms get hot and stuffy.

# 6. Handouts for Participants



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# Q&A Dialogue Journal Writing with Limited-English-Proficient (LEP) Students

*Prepared by Joy Kreeft Peyton*

*April, 1987*

All teachers would like to have more time to communicate with their students, to learn about their backgrounds, interests and needs. The need to communicate is intensified with students learning English as a second language (ESL). At a minimum, they bring to school a different language and cultural background. They may also be non-literate in their native language, have had little or no schooling in their own countries, and possibly have suffered considerable trauma as they left their country to come to the United States. If they are new arrivals to the United States, they are adjusting to an entirely new way of life as they learn the language and begin to function in school. It is with these students that communication, on a one-to-one basis, is crucial--not only to help them adjust, but to help the teacher understand them and address their special needs.

Many teachers of such students--both in the mainstream and ESL classroom--have found "dialogue journals," interactive writing on an individual basis, to be a crucial part of their teaching. Dialogue journals not only open a channel of communication not previously possible, but they also provide a context for language and writing development. Students have the opportunity to use English in a non-threatening atmosphere, in interaction with a proficient English speaker. Because the interaction is written, it allows students to use reading and writing in purposeful ways and provides a natural, comfortable bridge to other kinds of writing that are done in school.

## *What Is A Dialogue Journal?*

A dialogue journal is a written conversation in which a student and teacher communicate regularly--daily, if possible, or at least two or three times a week--over a period of one semester or an entire school year. Students may write as much as they choose on any topic and the teacher writes back regularly to each student (each time they write, if possible)--often responding to the student's topics, but also introducing new topics; making comments and offering observations and opinions; requesting and giving clarification; asking questions and answering student questions. The teacher's role is as a participant *with* the student in an ongoing, written conversation, rather than as an evaluator who corrects or comments on the writing.

The following examples, excerpted from the dialogue journal entries of two sixth graders from El Salvador and the Philippines in a mainstream class of LEP students, illustrate the nature of the writing:

March 17

***Claudia:*** *The new teacher or helper in our class is very good. I like her, don't you like her? Today she helped me and us a lot. But Tony didn't want help. Why doesn't Tony want us to help him?*

*I will try & bring my lunch every day from now on because the turkey stew & other lunches put me sick. I hate them. When I am very hungry I have to eat them but when I get to my house my stomach hurts & I am sick for 3 days. Can't the teachers protest or say something about the food that they give here?*

*What do you feed chickens here? We have a hen that layd an egg.*

***Teacher:*** *The lunches are not that bad! I've eaten them sometimes. You are wise to bring your own lunch. That is usually what I do, too. You have such good food at home that nothing served here could taste so good!*

*Tony is embarrassed. He wants help, but he does not want anyone to know that he needs it. Offer to help him and if he says "no" then leave him alone.*

*Chickens will eat scraps of bread, wheat, seeds, water and some insects.*

March 18

***Claudia:*** *but the hen has wat it looks like worms, do you know how to get the hen of her stomach sickness or is it usual for her to be like that because she is laying eggs and she could even lay 30 eggs so I do not know if it is usual or if it is a sickness of her.*

*oh poor hen she cooks & cooks when I say pretty hen in a low low voice & she looks like she is used to children because she is cook & cooking when I say pretty things, oh she's so nice.*

***Teacher:*** *I've never heard of a hen having worms--but it is possible. Go to a pet shop or to a veterinarian and ask them. Who gave you the hen? Maybe they will know.*

*We say that a hen clucks. It is a pleasant little sound as though they are happy. They cackle when they lay an egg! That is usually loud! Does your hen cackle?*

*I think hens like having people or other hens around, don't you?*

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Washington, DC 20037

April 7

***Ben:*** *I got a chance to look at all those weird bones. They're weird because I usually see them with their skin, bones, and hair and with their eyes or eyeballs. Where did you get all of those bones? Did you got them from the desserts? I feel sorry for the turtles or the animals that lived in the deserts and got run over by those cruel men and women...I like and loved tamed animals.*

***Teacher:*** *Yes, I've collected the bones, and my children, as they've grown up, have found and brought me bones because they know I like to use them in teaching. Have you looked at the teeth? Some come to a sharp point and some are very flat with ridges on the top. All animals die--and if their bones are uneaten the sun and wind and rain clean and dry them out. So many of those animals may have died a natural death.*

Through dialogue journals, students write about topics that are important to them as they occur in their lives, and explore them in the written genre that is appropriate. They are not constrained by teacher- or curriculum-established topics or by a pre-set schedule of topics and genres that must be covered in sequence. Sometimes their concerns and interests are personal, as in Claudia's complaint about the food at school. Likewise, journal entries may relate to material covered in school, as in Ben's entry. At other times, activities and interests at home generate the opportunity for learning in the journal, as occurred through Claudia's discussion of her chickens. Students may write descriptions, explanations, narratives, complaints, or arguments with supporting details, as the topic and communicative purpose dictate. Entries may be as brief as a few sentences, or they may extend for several pages. Topics may be introduced briefly and dropped, or discussed and elaborated on by teacher and student together for several days.

Because the teacher is attempting above all to communicate with the student, his or her writing is roughly tuned to the student's language proficiency level. Just as they learn over time to adjust to each student's level of understanding in speech, teachers can easily become competent at varying their language in a dialogue journal to individual students to ensure comprehension (Kreeft, Shuy, Staton, Reed and Morroy, 1984). For example, in the exchange below from the dialogue journal of a student in the early stages of learning English, the teacher uses relatively simple syntax and words the student knows or has used in her entry. The same teacher's entry to Ben, above, is linguistically much more complex.

***Laura:*** *Today I am so happy because yesterday my father sad he was going to by a new washengmashin [washing machine] then yesterday he came with a new car a beg new car is a Honda and she has the radio. Leticia like to talk abowt me yesterday she sad every thing abowt my diat to the boy I danth like that.*

***Teacher:*** *How nice! A new car! What color is it? Did you take a ride in the new car?*

*I'm sure Leticia did not think when she told the boys about your diet! She is so thin she does not need to think about a diet so she does not understand how you feel. Tell her!*

An essential characteristic of dialogue journal writing is the lack of overt error correction. The teacher has sufficient opportunities to correct errors on other assignments; thus, the dialogue journal is one place where students may write freely, without focusing on form. The teacher's response in the journal serves instead as a model of correct English usage in the context of the dialogue. The teacher can, however, take note of error patterns found in the journals and use them as the basis for later lessons in class. Sometimes the same structures that the student has attempted to use are modeled by the teacher and more details added, as in this example:

***Michael:*** *today morning you said this is my lovely friends right? She told me about book story name is "the lady first in the air." She tell me this lady was first in the air, and she is flying in the Pacific ocean, and she lose it everybody find her but they can't find it. They looked in the ocean still not here. Did she know everything of book?*

***Teacher:*** *My lovely friend Mrs. P reads a lot. She has read the book about Amelia Earhart. It is a good story and it is a true story. They looked and looked but they never found her airplane or her.* [Emphasis added.]

This example very clearly demonstrates teacher modeling. In most cases, such direct modeling of particular structures and vocabulary is neither possible nor desirable, for the journals would become stilted and unnatural. More often, modeling takes the form of correct English usage by the teacher, stated roughly at the student's level of ability, and related to something the student has written about, such as in the interchange with Laura cited above.

## *What Are The Benefits to Students and Teachers?*

Many teachers, from early elementary grades through adult education, use dialogue journals to extend contact time with their students and to get to know them in a way that may not be possible otherwise. Through the medium of the journals, they may discuss the student's native culture and language, problems in adjusting to the new culture and to school rules and procedures, and personal and academic interests. This information not only builds strong personal ties, but also gives students individualized access to a competent, adult member of the new language and culture. Through this relationship the student has the opportunity to reflect on new experiences and emerging knowledge and to think through with an adult ideas, problems and important choices (Staton, 1984b).

There are also benefits related to the management of a classroom with students of varying language and ability levels. All students, no matter what their language proficiency level, can participate in the activity to some extent. In classes composed of students with a range of ability levels, or into which students newly-arrived from other countries are enrolled throughout the school year, dialogue journals afford the immediate opportunity of participation in an important class

activity. Since students' dialogue journal entries give continual feedback about what they understand in class as well as their language progress, the teacher receives information that leads to individualized instruction for each student, beginning through advanced.

Another major benefit has been observed in the areas of language acquisition and writing development. Dialogue journal interactions provide optimal conditions for language acquisition, both oral and written (Kreeft, 1984a, 1986; Staton, 1984a). For example, they focus on meaning rather than on form, and on real topics and issues of interest to the learner. The teacher's written language serves as input that is modified to, but slightly beyond, the learner's proficiency level; thus, the teacher's entries provide reading texts that may be even more complex and advanced than the student's assigned texts (Staton, 1986), but which are comprehensible because they relate to what the student has written. Beyond the modeling of language form and structure, the teacher's writing also provides continual exposure to the thought, style and manner of expression of a proficient English writer. As students continue to write, and read the teacher's writing, they develop confidence in their own ability to express themselves in writing. Teachers using dialogue journals report that their students' writing becomes more fluent, interesting, and correct over time, and that writing ability developed in dialogue journals transfers to other in-class writing as well (Hayes and Bahruth, 1985; Hayes, Bahruth and Kessler, 1986).

### *How Much Time Is Involved?*

The single drawback of dialogue journals is the considerable teacher time required to read and respond to student entries. However, those teachers who have been successful with dialogue journals report that the time is well spent, for the knowledge they gain about students' interests and problems and the feedback they receive about the activities and lessons of the day serve as the basis for future planning. They have also found ways to make the process more manageable. For example, teachers with many classes and students (especially at the secondary level), sometimes choose to keep journals with only one or two classes, or have students write two or three times per week, rather than daily.

### *Can Dialogue Journals Be Used with All Students?*

Yes. Dialogue journals were first used successfully with sixth grade students, both native and nonnative English speakers (Kreeft, et al., 1984; Staton, 1980; Staton, Shuy, Kreeft Peyton, and Reed, 1987). They are now being used with ESL students, from elementary grades through the university (Gutstein, Meloni, Harmatz, Kreeft and Batterman, 1983); with adult ESL students who are non- or semi-literate in their native languages (Hester, 1986); with migrant children and youths (Davis, 1983; Hayes and Bahruth, 1985; Hayes et al., 1986); with hearing-impaired children (Bailes, Searls, Slobodzian and Staton, 1986) and adults (Walworth, 1985); and with mentally handicapped teenagers and adults (Farley, 1986; Kreeft Peyton and Steinberg, 1985).

With non-literate students, there should be no initial pressure to write. Students can begin by drawing pictures, with the teacher drawing pictures in reply and perhaps writing a few words underneath or labeling the pictures. The move to letters and words can be made when students feel ready. At beginning levels, the interaction may be more valuable as a reading event, with more emphasis placed on reading the teacher's entry than on writing one. In classes where native language literacy is the focus, it is possible to conduct the dialogue journal interaction in the students' native language. The move to English can occur in line with course objectives or student readiness.

Dialogue journals need not be limited to language arts or ESL classes. In content classes--science, social studies, literature, and even math--they encourage reflection on and processing of concepts presented in class and in readings (Atwell, 1984), and because they bridge the gap between spoken and written language, they can be a way to promote abilities needed for composition (Kreeft, 1984b; Shuy, 1987).

### *How Do You Get Started?*

- Each student should have a bound and easily portable notebook, used only for this purpose. Paperbound composition books that are large enough to allow sufficient writing and small enough for the teacher to carry home after class are best. A student may fill several notebooks during a term.
- The writing must be done regularly, but the frequency can be flexible, depending on the number of students in a class, the length of the class, the teacher's schedule, and the needs of the teacher and students.
- Most teachers prefer to give their students time to write during the class session. This time may be scheduled at the beginning of a class as a warm-up, at the end as a wind-down, or before or after a break as a transition time. Likewise, the teacher may allow the students to choose a time for making journal entries. Ten or fifteen minutes is usually adequate to read the teacher's entry and write a new one. Teachers usually respond outside class time.
- In the beginning stages, it seems desirable to set a minimum amount that students must write each time (such as three sentences), but the amount of writing beyond that should be up to each student. Students should understand, however, that long, polished pieces are not required.
- When introducing the idea of dialogue journals, the teacher should inform students that they will be participating in a continuing, private, written conversation, that they may write on any topic, and that the teacher will write back each time without correcting errors. The mechanics of when they will write, when the journals will be turned in, when they will be returned, etc., should be explained. When students are unable to think of something to write, the teacher might suggest one or two possible topics. It is important that everyone has something to write and that they feel comfortable with it.

- It is important that the teacher enter into the journal interaction as a good conversationalist and an interesting writer, and expect students to do the same. The goal is to be responsive to student topics and ask questions about them at times, but also to introduce topics and write about oneself and one's own interests and concerns. Teacher entries that simply echo what the student wrote or that ask a lot of questions (typical "teacher talk") can stifle rather than promote interaction.
- Finally, the teacher should relax and enjoy the writing! For many teachers, reading and writing in dialogue journals is the best part of the day--a wonderful time to reflect on the past day's work, to find out about the people with whom they are spending the semester or year, and to think about where their work together is taking them.

## *Resources*

*Dialogue*, a newsletter about dialogue journal research and practice, is available from the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR), Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20037. Cost per year of a subscription to *Dialogue* is $6 for 3 issues. A volume of back issues, which contains newsletters from the past four years, a history of dialogue journals, a publications list, and abstracts of dissertations written about dialogue journals, is also available from CLEAR for $7. [Checks should be made payable to Handbook Press.]

The only teacher handbook available to date is *It's Your Turn Now: A Handbook for Teachers of Deaf Students*, by Cindy Bailes, Susan Searls, Jean Slobodzian and Jana Staton (1986). Write the Gallaudet Pre-College Outreach Program, Washington, DC 20002 for a copy.

A handbook for teachers of limited-English-proficient students will soon be available from CLEAR.

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# A Brief Guide for Getting Started with Dialogue Journals

## Introducing the Idea

- Discuss the natural need to communicate and understand each other in the classroom; use the analogy of phone conversations in which each person gets a turn. DO NOT talk about the dialogue as a way to "improve your writing."
- Discuss the importance of privacy: each dialogue journal belongs to two writers, to be shared only with consent.
- Brainstorm some possible topics and functions for writing the first day or two. Functions might include evaluating lessons, describing personal activities, giving opinions, requesting help, suggesting class activities, complaining, or expressing feelings.
- Stress that entries can vary in length, but set a minimum (such as "two lines" of writing, or "three sentences") for those days when there just isn't much to write about.
- Students should write first each day to reinforce their ownership and personal responsibility for coming up with topics.
- Don't worry about the content of the first entries—what matters is getting students into the routine of writing and expecting your response.

## Management

- You can start gradually, with a few students who seem ready or with one group at a time, to gain experience in responding to students' entries before doing it with a whole class.
- Provide a journal for each student. With elementary students, it is preferable that the notebook have a cover that can be decorated. With primary students, a notebook with primary lines is best.
- Set aside a brief time for students to read your responses and write back. Often this can be done in the period before the class formally begins. Elementary students can use independent work time and transition times.
- Create a place where students can leave their journals for you when they are finished writing.
- Use positive reinforcement strategies to encourage regular entries, expressing your own interest in what they are writing and providing "extra" time during recess or after school for those who "forget." Do make clear that this kind of daily communication is a requirement, even though the writing is not graded.
- Give yourself and your students time. It takes 1 or 2 months for most students to get going and much longer for a few. Teachers also find they need almost a year to feel completely comfortable with this new kind of communication.
- A few students are not going to like having a written dialogue with you, and will do only the minimum. That is their choice. Just as the dialogue journal will not work for every teacher, it will not work for every student.

## Guidelines for Teacher Responses

Responding is the most enjoyable part of the process. Teacher responses should encourage and stimulate a continued dialogue when important topics come up. Some suggestions:

- Focus on the meaning, not the form, of students' entries.
- Acknowledge the students' topics and encourage them to elaborate on their interests.

- Affirm and support each student; the private dialogue is a great place for compliments about appearance, behavior, or class participation.
- Add new, relevant information about topics so that *your* response is interesting to read.
- Don't write (much) more than the students do.
- Avoid glib comments like "good idea" or "very interesting." These cut off rather than promote dialogue.
- Ask very few questions. Instead, make interesting contributions of your own. When you ask questions, embed them in your contributions. The goal is to get students to ask *you* questions and to make your writing so interesting that they will want to know more.

Adapted from Staton, J. (1987). The power of responding in dialogue journals. In T. Fulwiler (Ed.), *The journal book*, pp. 47–63. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook (a division of Heinemann Educational Books).

# Back Issues of Dialogue

All back issues of *Dialogue*, from its inception in 1982 to fall 1989, are available in one volume. This volume contains:

1. A history of the implementation and study of dialogue journal writing since we first learned about it in 1979 from Leslee Reed in Los Angeles, California
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*The world needs real dialogue. The only possible dialogue is the kind between people who remain what they are and speak their minds.*
*— Albert Camus*

*The Newsletter about Dialogue Journals*
*Vol. V No. 3, December 1988*

# INTERACTIVE WRITING IN BILINGUAL EDUCATION

The goal of this issue is to document the special characteristics and uses of dialogue journal writing in bilingual contexts. Clearly, there are many similarities between dialogue journals in other contexts and those in bilingual or multilingual situations. The articles in this issue demonstrate an additional benefit with bilingual children and adults: they can develop literacy skills in both languages.

For developing the literacy skills of young bilingual children, the availability of two languages in the writing provides language options — topics may be written about in either language and literacy skills developed in both. Three authors describe case studies of children's literacy develop- ment in both the first and second languages, highlight- ing the positive effects of writing with a supportive, non-judgmental adult lan- guage partner.

Flores and Hernandez studied kindergarten and first grade children's acquisition of literacy and biliteracy skills. To the amazement of their teachers, the children developed competency in writing, implemented their knowledge of writing conventions, and over time, could communicate effectively in writing with their teachers.

García and García highlight the role of journal writing in validating students' language and sociocultural experiences. This validation forms the underpinnings of their acquisition of literacy skills. The teacher supports children's efforts in the native language and the second language (English) by providing a linguistic environment which builds on their experience, while nurturing native and second language development.

Flores, Rueda and Hidalgo describe a situation in which a learning disabled child learns how to write because his teacher organized experiences in her classroom that allowed the children to use language to construct meaning in social contexts.

Dialogue journals serve to promote improved communication among bilingual adults as effectively as they do with children. Dale Vigil wrote dialogue journals in Spanish with his staff, to share thoughts and school concerns. He found that the journals provided an added forum for the resolution of school problems and concerns and for the building of solidarity between an administrator and his staff.

George Blanco discusses the dialogue journals he used with teacher trainees to improve their Spanish language skills. He notes that his students' language skills did improve, along with their self-confidence in using Spanish.

Finally, Martha Dolly compares repair strategies in the dialogue journals of adult native English speakers learning Spanish with those of adult nonnative speakers learning English. She found that nonnative speakers employed a wider variety of repairs than the native speakers, who relied on the language they shared with the teacher to clarify misunderstandings. She suggests that writing to promote second language acquisition might be more effective if the partners do not share a native language.

As has been true in many discussions of dialogue journal writing, the development of language and literacy skills may be a compelling factor, but equally important seems to be the opportunity to share cultures and views. §§ — S.G.

# A BILINGUAL KINDERGARTNER'S SOCIOPSYCHOGENESIS OF LITERACY AND BILITERACY

Barbara M. Flores, California State University, San Bernadino
Eddie Hernandez, Calexico, California

In 1985 Dool Elementary primary teachers in Calexico, California, began to transform their beliefs, theories, and practices related to emergent literacy and biliteracy. They had traditionally believed that kindergarteners and first graders could not and should not write until at least the month of January during their first grade. In kindergarten, the teachers only expected the children to learn how to write the alphabet and their names. First grade children were expected only to perfectly copy sentences from the blackboard. Bilingual children, especially those from very poor families, were not expected to do anything more than know the alphabet, their name, how to copy from the board, and how to decode syllabically in Spanish if that was their dominant language.

The teachers taught letter names and some phonics in kindergarten. Phonics were always taught in isolation, using worksheets and Basal readers. In first grade the children were grouped by reading ability. Bilingual teachers grouped their children into six groups: high, middle, and low in English and high, middle, and low in Spanish. Copying was considered writing. Not many bilingual children learned to read and write proficiently in spite of the teachers' dedication.

In 1985, the teachers began to shift their focus from a skill-based approach to a whole language approach. They had agreed, as part of their staff development efforts, to collaborate with us in action research, teaching and learning using the new praxis (theory-in-action and action-guided-by-theory) about literacy learning and teaching in two languages. We also agreed to a three-year commitment to monthly staff development that focussed on the critical pedagogy of coming to know.

Dialogue journal writing was the first social context that we organized for the teaching and learning of written language. The program we set up was based on an earlier study (Flores & García, 1984). On the first day of school, the children, the majority of whom were bilingual and from low socioeconomic families, were asked to draw and write in their journals on a daily basis. They were asked to write "their way." Many children said they could not write, but when we told them it was okay to pretend to write, to write their way, or to write like five and six year olds, they did. The teachers were absolutely incredulous because they had assumed that the children did not know anything about written language.

The following is a case study of one kindergartner's cognitive and linguistic evolution of knowledge about writing. Jesús comes from a bilingual family that speaks both Spanish and English. His acquisition of literacy in both languages is a living testimony that we cannot continue to underestimate the cognitive and linguistic potential of our language minority (soon to be majority) children.

His first journal entry (See Figure 1) demonstrates that Jesús had knowledge about left-to-right directionality, letter formation, linearity, and the arbitrariness of letter/symbols, and an adequate repetoire of letters.

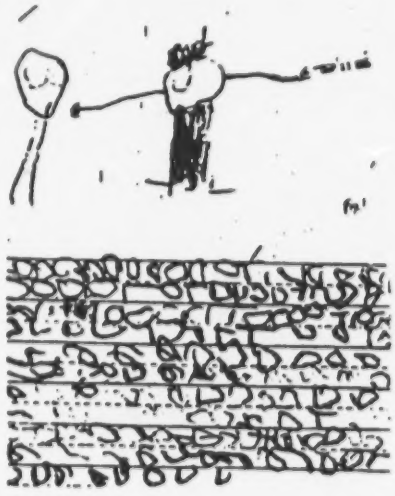

Figure 1.

His October entry (Figure 2) shows more sophisticated letter formations, refinement, and better control of the pencil. He was using a presyllabic conceptual interpretation (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982) of our alphabetic writing systems in Spanish and English. His teacher, Mr. Hernandez, genuinely responded to Jesus' rendition of having spiders at home. Even though Mr. Hernandez could not read what Jesus had written, he encouraged the

children to write "their way." Each child orally read his message and therefore mediated meaning (Vygotsky, 1978) with an alternate sign system. Since the children could not read Mr. Hernandez' written message either, he also mediated his meaning by orally reading it as he wrote it with each child watching him as he wrote.

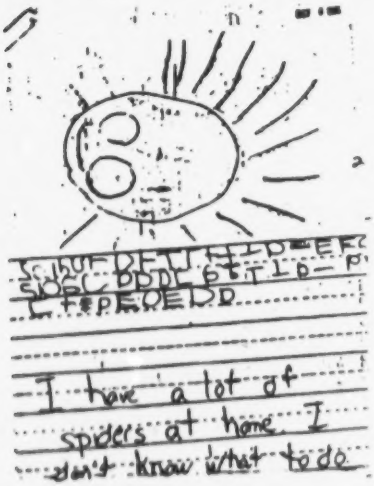


Figure 2.

Mr. Hernandez and the children were engaged in more than just dialogue journal writing. They were engaged in a meaningful exchange of personal and academic cultural knowledge. As Jesús wrote, he shared his evolving knowledge about written language. As his teacher wrote and mediated his writing, he shared the adult cultural expectation of written language in this particular context. He also demonstrated how all the cueing systems (pragmatic, semantic, syntactic, graphophonemic, and orthographic) (Goodman, 1982) are simultaneously used to represent meaning in writing. Finally, he deliberately organized a zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) each time he wrote to Jesus.

By the end of the year Jesús was a balanced bilingual, writing alphabetically in both Spanish and English. His invented spellings, both in English and in Spanish, approximated our adult expectancy. In Spanish he wrote: *"LA CHAKA TBO I GATO"* (Chaka had one cat). His teacher responded authentically: *"Tu abuelita me dijo que la chaca estaba muy triste y no quería comer"* (Your grandma told me that Chaca was really sad and didn't want to eat.) (Figure 3).

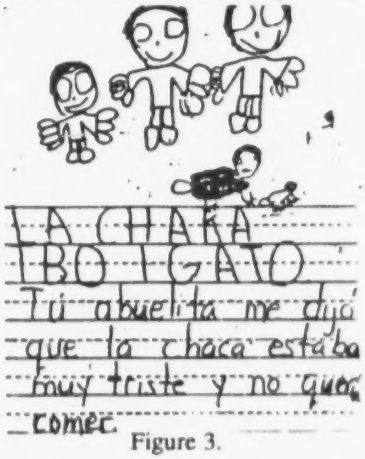


Figure 3.

In English he wrote: *"AI HAV A WALE AV RABO."* (I have a wallet of Rambo.) His teacher responded authentically: *"Cesar has a wallet too. So do I, but it's not of Rambo."* (Figure 4).

From his teacher's daily transactions within the communicative context of dialogue journals, Jesus learned to read and write alphabetically in both Spanish and English. Both his teacher and parents were amazed. Yes, it is amazing what children can learn if we teachers know how to socially organize the learning and teaching. It is important for us to learn *more* about how children learn language, oral or written, first or second, so that we can not only organize, but deliberately facilitate, monitor, and document our children's sociopsychogenesis of literacy and biliteracy.

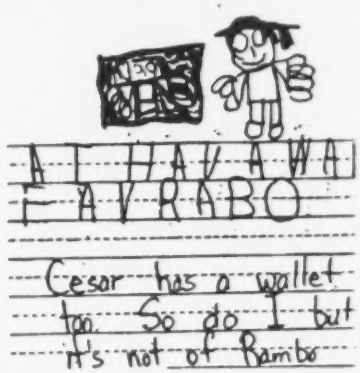


Figure 4.

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# JOURNALS IN SUPPORT OF BILITERACY

Eugene E. García, University of California, Santa Cruz
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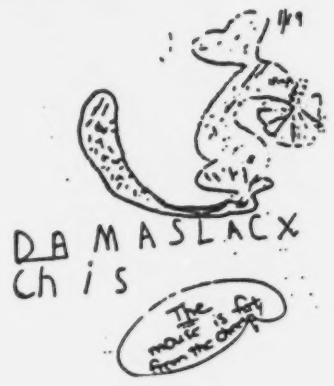
In recent years, the use of dialogue journal communication has served as an instructional technique to enhance biliteracy development in language minority students (Flores and García, 1984; Urzúa, 1987; García, 1988). Flores and García (1984) particularly emphasized the benefits of this form of student-teacher interaction in bilingual education classrooms, where students can use their native language to communicate. The journal provides another communicative context for the student and teacher, but the communication is primarily under the "control" of the student. Such written interaction has been reported as significant in the development of complex writing skills (Edelsky, 1986).

Researchers have also examined the development of written language in native Spanish speaking children enrolled in classrooms where first language literacy is emphasized prior to implementing an integrated Spanish/English curriculum (Hudelson, 1988). Findings from this research suggest that complex literacy skills acquired through journal interactions in the native language are directly related to the emergence of complex writing skills in English.

We believe that two factors are of particular importance in the development of writing skills: sociocultural variables in the commmunicative context and the type of written response produced by the teacher. The following brief discussion expands on these two points.

In an ongoing study by the authors, of writing in a first grade bilingual classroom, all of the children write daily in their dialogue journals about a self-selected topic. Most of the entries are written in the students' native language. These entries reflect experiences embedded in that native language and the corresponding sociocultural milieu. In essence, the students are invited to bring their background knowledge to the classroom and the teaching-learning enterprise. This approach directly acknowledges the significance of each student's experiences. Moreover, the journal context is supported by the understanding that meaning is being transacted between the student and the teacher. If entries are to be understood by the teacher, the child must use knowledge about a writing system, risk acceptance of his/her sociocultural experiences, and anticipate a mutual response from the teacher. In turn, the teacher models complex written expression, obtains information from the child, and anticipates a mutual response from the student. By supporting students in this enterprise, their language and sociocultural experiences are validated as the bond of teacher/child communication is built. The interactive journal process thus builds on the understanding that learning is enhanced when it occurs in contexts that are both socioculturally and linguistically meaningful to the learner.

In an instructional context, interactive journals not only incorporate the students' prior sociocultural and language experiences but also nurture the acquisition of communicative competencies in English. Some of the children in this first grade bilingual classroom choose topics that they may have experienced in English and then write their entry in that language. In these entries the students demonstrate linguistic flexibility through knowledge gained from their own prior entries and responses modeled by the teacher. An example of this linguistic flexibility is demonstrated by Nellie who uses her knowledge of Spanish spelling and syntax to risk communicating her ideas about a mouse in English.

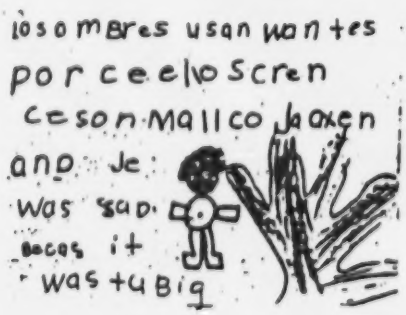



("The mouse likes cheese.")

The types of responses provided by the teacher are highly significant. If the student's entry is in the native language, the teacher's

native language response reaffirms the importance of native language use and development. If the student's entry is in English, the teacher's English response conveys a willingness by the teacher to pursue another communicative alternative.

Aside from the language of response, the quality of the teacher's response is also significant for native and second language literacy development. The teacher must ensure that his or her response is authentic while also engaging students in higher order linguistic and cognitive communication. Too often teachers' interactions with limited English speaking students are watered down to the teacher's limited expectations of these students' communicative abilities. We would recommend the opposite strategy: These students need to be challenged linguistically and cognitively in their second language. The journal context is the perfect place to encourage children not only to construct meaning in English but also to process a response that calls for higher order communicative and cognitive functioning. Delia, in the example which follows, demonstrates how she met this challenge when her teacher asked, *"Why do men wear gloves?"*:




In summary, dialogue journals can play a key role in enhancing the biliteracy competence of linguistic minority students. They build on the child's own experiences, nurture native language development, and expand complex English competencies. However, this is only possible if the teacher is aware of the sociocultural relevance of this communication and of the role he or she can play in supporting the development of biliteracy through natural and challenging responses to student entries. Such recognition can make a dialogue journal a true communicative context that enhances biliteracy. §§

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# EVERYONE BELONGS WHEN USING DIALOGUE JOURNALS: A STORY ABOUT LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Barbara M. Flores, California State University, San Bernadino
Robert Rueda, University of Southern California
Gloria Hidalgo, Phoenix, Arizona

Said was a fourth grade student, but he was exceptional because he could not write. According to the Special Education teacher, he had a learning disability and needed direct instruction in discrete skills. However, his classroom teacher, Mrs. Hidalgo, had a different assessment of his "problem." Apparently in his four years of schooling, Said had not learned to read and write like his fourth grade counterparts, and he did not want any of his classmates to know it. Mrs. Hidalgo believed that all students could learn, and that the teacher should build on each child's strength. She also had knowledge and experience about how children learn written language, which she had garnered from various theoretical frameworks such as sociopsycholinguistics (Goodman, 1970, 1982; Halliday, 1978; Smith, 1971), sociocultural perspectives (Vygotsky, 1962; Diaz, Moll & Mehan, 1984), psychogenetics (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Flores, Amabisca, & Castro, in press), and critical pedagogy (Freire & Macedo, 1987; Shor & Freire, 1987).

She deliberately organized the learning and teaching contexts in her whole language bilingual classroom so that the children could genuinely engage in the social construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1962) by using language as their tool. She did not group them by reading/writing ability. Instead, she organized the learning/teaching situations so that all children participated and had equal opportunities to engage in meaningful and critical dialogue (Freire, 1970). Dialogue journal writing represented just one of these opportunities.

Said participated, reluctantly at first, but gradually came to understand the purpose of dialogue journals as a place to share ideas, fears, dreams, and thoughts, and as a place to learn. His first entry (see Figure 1) did not bother his teacher because she knew that this was his way of representing meaning. However, she also knew that she could not read his writing nor he hers. So they mediated (Vygotsky, 1978) each other's writing by reading it aloud. Mrs. Hidalgo knew that Said's conceptual interpretation of the alphabetic writing system was still at a presyllabic level (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982). With daily transactions, she would be demonstrating the alphabetic and conventional use of writing, and Said would eventually learn to write English conventionally so everyone could understand it. Patience and the belief that Said's cognitive development would progress allowed Mrs. Hidalgo and Said the chance to continue their written communications on a daily basis.

The following journal entries tell the story of Said's literacy development. His first entry (Figure 1) demonstrates that he had knowledge of letters and conventions such as segmentation and punctuation, but his message could not be understood unless it was read aloud. Mrs. Hidalgo did not demean his attempt to communicate, but instead requested that he orally read his entry because she was "really interested in what he had to say." Said's attempt was valued and his knowledge about written language was accepted.

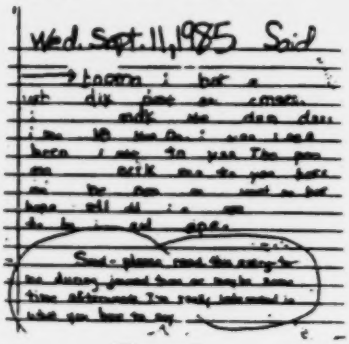


Figure 1.

For three and one half months, Said's entries looked like his first one in September. Not until January, 1986 did his writing become more alphabetic. He wrote:

*I like Mr. hansen he was happy with us we all intoed (enjoyed) hime I hope so he will be back one of this days I no he will I hat tadol tails (tattletales) do you if we tel on my sister if she do someing My mom will hit us.*

He had come a long way since September. He was using an alphabetic writing system that could be understood, and he had begun to write freely about his

concerns and opinions and to share cultural knowledge with his teacher. His working understanding of written language was accepted, and he had learned that he could use writing to share experiences.

Cultural knowledge is coshared, co-created, and colearned. Freire (1970) says that a learner is empowered when he/she realizes that knowledge can be re-created and co-created with another person. Said learned to read and write because his teacher organized the learning and teaching so that he belonged; his cultural knowledge was valued; they mutually mediated each others' written meaning with oral language; and his literacy development in his second language was always a shared goal.

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# The WRITE Administrative Style

Dale W. Vigil
Denver Public Schools

In the Denver Public Schools, one of our main goals is that all students, especially the limited English proficient students, will join the "literacy club." We would also like to see all participating Anglo, Black and Hispanic pupils in bilingual education join the "biliteracy club."

One way of preparing our students to attain this goal is to ensure that they have ample opportunities to communicate in two languages. One strategy that has proven to be effective has been dialogue journal writing. Students learn to read and write by reading and writing in a natural and meaningful interaction, expressing their ideas, thoughts, and feelings in an open-ended fashion with their teachers.

Dialogue journals also have had a place in public education outside of the classroom. In the Denver Public School's Department of Bilingual/ESOL Education, I have used them in two ways. Both ways have allowed me to communicate more effectively as an administrator.

The first way dialogue journals have helped me has been with management. Last year I needed to communicate individually with eleven colleagues in the department. A number of them were housed in another building and those that shared an office complex with me were often out in the schools, interacting with teachers, students and principals. Time constraints on our staff meetings did not permit us to communicate in detail on certain issues or events. After I began dialogue journals with these colleagues, two things became apparent. First, we were able to share information regarding our activities. Details could be elaborated without the fear of taking up too much time at staff meetings. At times, closure on certain issues required several entries. That was fine with me because we were able to support each other on actions that dealt with improvement of instruction or areas which needed clarification. We sometimes shared personal feelings, which allowed us to understand and support each other in many situations.

Second, some of the staff and I had the opportunity to refine our writing skills in Spanish. I asked my colleagues who were bilingual in English and Spanish if they would be comfortable with me writing to them in Spanish only. All of them agreed, and chose to respond to me in Spanish as well. It gave us a natural context in which to fine tune our Spanish literacy skills. We communicate orally in Spanish very often and stay quite proficient. However, writing opportunities come less frequently.

The second way that dialogue journals have helped me as an administrator has been in understanding how this process works in the classroom with students. I decided to write a dialogue journal with a bilingual sixth grade elementary school student. She had received her instruction exclusively in English, even though she came from a Spanish speaking home. When I met "Elvia," her oral skills in English and Spanish were quite good, but she had not yet acquired Spanish literacy skills. After establishing rapport with her, I asked Elvia (in Spanish) if she would mind interacting entirely in Spanish in our journal, and she was very cordial in accepting this request. She was comfortable with the activity, but expressed concern that she had never written in Spanish before. I assured her that I was not interested in her spelling but rather in her ideas, thoughts and feelings about what she did every day.

In the four months that we had our dialogue journal, I observed four things: 1) It was clear to me that Elvia was comfortable using Spanish in the journal. 2) Her spelling improved as she wrote her own and read my entries. My modeling appeared to help her see how certain words were spelled. 3) Throughout her journal entries, Elvia did minimal code switching into English. 4) Most of her writing employed Spanish syntax.

My experiences with Elvia and with my colleagues have been beneficial. I was able to lower my own anxiety about the sharing of information with colleagues, and I experienced how teachers can use dialogue journals to encourage literacy.

This year I plan to use a dialogue journal with another student to see what else I can learn from him/her through our writing. I can't wait. §§

# SPANISH FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION TEACHERS: THE ROLE OF DIALOGUE JOURNALS

George M. Blanco
The University of Texas at Austin

Using dialogue journals in my teaching has been late in coming. Now I use them with a vengeance! I had read about their use and had heard speakers at conferences provide detailed descriptions about journals, but dismissed them as too gimmicky for my purposes, and did not take them seriously until I began working on a project on the teaching of Spanish to the native Spanish speaker. This project was initiated by the Texas Education Agency (Texas State Department of Education), and funded by Title II, Education for Economic Security Act. The general purpose of the project was to upgrade the state program on teaching Spanish to native speakers at the secondary school level. Part of the project was the development of a state curriculum guide, *Español para el hispanohablante: Función y noción.* *

This guide was pilot tested by secondary school Spanish teachers principally in the San Antonio area, and by its three other authors. It was not until the guide was published, however, that I had the opportunity to implement in my own teaching some of the instructional strategies it recommended, including dialogue journals. The section entitled "El diario interactivo" was written by Robert Bahruth, a doctoral student in bilingual education at The University of Texas at Austin. According to Bahruth, dialogue journal writing builds on students' prior knowledge and writing skills in English. It is not necessary to postpone dialogue journal writing until the class has been introduced to all of the writing conventions and grammatical rules of the Spanish language, because students can transfer their existing literacy skills in English to Spanish.

As a result of this introduction, I began to use dialogue journals in my own classes. My approach was in keeping with my philosophy for engaging future bilingual education teachers in Spanish language expansion. The purpose of my course, Spanish for Bilingual Teachers, is to:

- Provide students with opportunities to learn and apply to teaching situations the technical language necessary to teach in such areas as social studies, science, arithmetic, etc.
- Develop in the students confidence in using instructional materials written in Spanish.
- Help the students learn to express themselves orally and in writing on topics common to the elementary classroom.

Dialogue journals have become central to this course. Since one of my main goals is to instill in students confidence in the use of oral and written Spanish, I feel it is important to provide them with many opportunities to express themselves orally and in writing and to ensure that these opportunities emphasize the message rather than the form of communication.

It is unfortunate that many of my native Spanish speaking students have had poor experiences in their high school and university Spanish courses. In many of these courses, there is a preoccupation with correction of spelling, grammar and vocabulary, so these students have developed a fear of expressing themselves in Spanish. They have also developed the erroneous notion that they do not know as much Spanish as they thought prior to enrolling in the Spanish course.

The idea of being able to commit their thoughts to writing without the fear of my correcting them has been refreshing and even mind-boggling to the students. Not until the first or second time that I return their journals do some of them really believe that I am not going to take my red pen to what they have written.

When I began using dialogue journals, I wrote my responses in longhand. This proved too time consuming, and some students had difficulty deciphering my handwriting. I now use a microcomputer for all my responses to their handwritten entries. This has been both a time-saver for me and a bonus for the students, because they find it much easier to read printed rather than handwritten entries Each week I respond to all the journals. I identify each entry with the individual student's name and date. I print all the responses on one continuous sheet, which I then cut and tape to

the individual journals.

The following selections from actual dialogue journals show the nature of my responses and the way that I attempt to model correct spelling, grammar, and vocabulary. The sentences in italics represent the student entries and those in regular print are my responses.

**Spelling**

*La música me facina. Yo cantaba en el coro de la escuela .*

A mí también me fascina la música, pero no toco ningún instrumento.

*E usado la bicicleta de ejercicio, pero no es lo mismo.*

Pues, yo no he participado en ese tipo de concurso o carrera, porque . . .

**Grammar**

*Durante la programa, dos señores tocaron la guitarra.*

¿De qué clase de música tocaron en el programa?

*Llevamos a los niños al parque y se divertieron mucho . . .*

Seguramente, los niños se divirtieron, ya que no estaban en la escuela.

*El director de la escuela no quiere que salimos antes de las cuatro.*

Por buena suerte, aquí en la universidad no les importa que salgamos antes de ciertas horas, con tal de que no faltemos a las clases.

**Vocabulary**

*El nos invitó a un show esa noche y nos divertimos mucho.*

¿De qué tipo de espectáculo fue?

*Esta semana, tuve conference con mi principal, porque . . .*

Las conferencias con el director a veces son difíciles .

My purpose in underlining is to call attention to certain items. I do not, nor cannot possibly, address all of the students' mistakes in my responses. I simply select those that either recur frequently or that I feel are especially critical. Since I strive to make my responses as natural as possible, there are occasions when I would like to call the student's attention to a particular construction or word, but I cannot do so without making my response seem contrived. If I feel that the item is sufficiently significant or that other members of the class will profit from my talking about it, I spend a few minutes of class time addressing the issue without identifying the student who had the problem.

In the course evaluations for Spring 1988, the dialogue journals were a frequent source of comment. The students expressed considerable appreciation for this activity. Although some were far from writing with complete accuracy, their attitude toward Spanish had changed noticeably, and they mentioned that they no longer feared writing in Spanish. Although their writing skills in English were still superior to those in Spanish, at least they learned that there was nothing wrong with consulting a dictionary for help in spelling words and in identifying synonyms, etc. At the beginning of the course, there were some who would rather have taken a chance on writing a word wrong than admit that they were unsure of its spelling.

I feel the use of dialogue journals has helped my students to express themselves more confidently and accurately. As future bilingual education teachers, they have developed a positive attitude which will encourage them to continue to perfect their literacy skills in Spanish. §§

*Blanco, G. M., et al. *Español para el hispanohablante funcion y noción.* Austin, TX: Texas Education Agency Publication No. 56690502.

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This 2-page, annotated bibliography of published articles and documents in ERIC's Languages and Linguistics data base is available free of charge. Contact:

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# NEGOTIATION OF MEANING IN WRITING: THE L1 FACTOR

Martha R. Dolly
Frostburg State University

One key factor influencing the nature of dialogue journal interaction in second language settings is whether or not partners share their first language. Students in bilingual programs in the U.S. may or may not be taught by someone fluent in their native language, whereas foreign language students and their teachers nearly always share fluency in English. My experience with American foreign language and ESL students suggests that dialogue journal interactions of partners who do not have a common L1 differ greatly from that of partners who do. I would argue that interations between those who don't share an L1 may be more effective for promoting language acquisition, because of the greater amount of language "repair" or "negotiation of meaning" that occurs.

Michael Long's (1983a,b) extensive research of oral conversation between native and nonnative speakers indicates that negotiation of meaning (modifying conversational structure to prevent or resolve communication breakdowns) is essential to second language (L2) acquisition. In dialogue journal writing, as in oral interaction, the negotiation of meaning may be initiated by either partner and is accomplished through various repair tactics, including confirmation requests, comprehension checks, and clarification requests. Repairs modify the structure of the conversation, forcing the nonnative speaker to grapple with understanding his interlocutor or making himself understood in the L2 in order to prevent communication breakdowns.

Resolving communication problems in dialogue writing may be less difficult than in oral conversation because a confused writer has time to ponder the partner's meaning. Still, my ESL students and I negotiated meaning quite frequently. For example, I was afraid I had not fully understood Hung Hwa's "agony" regarding the marriage her mother wanted to arrange for her and so initiated a confirmation request: "*Let me summarize what you told me, and if I've misunderstood something, maybe you can explain it to me.*" Hung Hwa confirmed my summary in her next entry: "*I think you have understood everything very well.*"

A related strategy, the comprehension check, allows the speaker/writer to verify that his message is being understood. Esteban frequently used checks such as "*I don't know if you can understand me. I know that I am not very clear.*"

The third meaning-negotiation strategy, the clarification request, asks the partner for elaboration. Rajiv explained to me that a statement I had not understood was an Urdu idiom meaning "before the things go out of your control."

In all three cases, these students ultimately succeeded in communicating with a partner who could not comprehend them unless they could make themselves understood in the target language.

Students who share a first language with the teacher but are communicating in the second language may find the conversation less challenging, and may therefore take fewer opportunities to negotiate meaning. Both partners are aware that their conversation is somewhat artificial, that their ideas could be more quickly and clearly communicated in their L1. Though shared culture and language help clarify meaning (I was usually able to understand my American students regardless of how garbled their Spanish was), participants sometimes simply resort to their L1 to clear up problems. I confess that I sometimes provide my American students with parenthetical explanations of my writing in English.

The most common student tactic is to insert a word or phrase from English in their Spanish ("Favor de decirme lo que Ud. meant by 'Kaypro'"). A riskier but still successful strategy is to translate an idiom literally, as did a student who wrote of a sister who had greatly improved her gymnastics skill, "Mi hermana ha venido una larga distancia" (My sister has come a long distance). As a native speaker of English, I recognized this as an American idiom in Spanish dress and easily made sense of it, but a native speaker of Spanish might have had to initiate repair.

The gap between artificial and authentic communication is further illustrated by my students who volunteered to

verbalize and tape record "whatever goes through your mind" while writing their entries. The Americans supplemented and clarified their Spanish texts with commentary in English ("*I meant here that I had spring fever. I didn't know exactly how to say it, so I thought this was a pretty creative way just to make it up*"). They sensed a need to negotiate meaning, but avoided using the L2 exclusively. ESL students, in contrast, made only a few brief extra-textual comments, always in the L2 ("With this short report I shall close for today"). All negotiation of meaning was carried out in their texts.

If we accept Long's conclusion that the negotiation of meaning is critical to language acquisition, we may want to encourage all L2 dialogue journal writers to work through communication problems in the L2 rather than allowing major problems to pass unresolved or relying on L1 shortcuts. Successful oral communication is a complex task for nonnative speakers, and refining negotiation strategies through dialogue journal discourse may ultimately help them manage their oral interactions more skillfully also. §§

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## Related Research on Bilingual Education

*Editor's Note: As a number of articles in this issue point out, one use of dialogue journals may be to develop/maintain first language literacy. The following research supports the importance of first language literacy for school success.*

A recent study of 2,000 limited English speaking students in Fairfax County, Virginia, concluded that certain groups of children might acquire English for academic purposes more rapidly if they received at least two years of instruction in their native tongue. The students were those who entered American schools with grade-level skills but no exposure to English prior to schooling here.

The study found clear differences in the ease with which pupils learned English, and were therefore on grade level in English on standardized tests in reading and other subjects. Children who began school in Fairfax at ages 507 scored poorly in all subjects four years later, compared with those who started school and an ESL program at ages 8-11. By the sixth grade, these older arivals were outperforming younger arrivals who had been in the United States two to three years longer. "The only known variable that differentiated" these two groups was the lack of schooling in their mother tongue for the younger-age students.

The stuudy noted that these findings are consistent with Jim Cummins' hypothesis that at least two years of literacy development in the first language is the necessary "threshhold" for the transfer of literacy and other cognitive skills to the second language. The 8 to 11 year olds were quicker to achieve cognitive proficiency because they had gotten a head start in their native language. The cognitive base in first language seems to help them significantly with their second-language schooling.

This six-year study, "Acquisition of Cognitive—Academic Second Language Proficiency," conducted by Virginia Collier and Wayne Thomas of George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, was begun in 1981 and released in 1988.

## Notes from the Field....

*"When other teachers learn what I'm doing I usually encounter shock and horror."*

I have been using dialogue journals for several weeks now, and I know I will never teach without them again. I learn things about my students that I never could otherwise, and vice versa.

The hour I spend with the journals is one of the best parts of my day. They are especially useful with sixth graders, as they give me vital information that I need to make their learning experiences relevant to their daily lives. They tell me how they play outside, the significant role their pets play in their lives, and all about their toys. For some of my students I am the only, or one of few, adults who take any time to treat them as equals, to converse with them, and respond to their ideas as valuable.

Everything involving the journals and the students has been wonderful. However, what is both interesting and perplexing is the reaction of other teachers. Usually I encounter shock and horror. They cannot believe a) that I "waste" so much time on such a project, and b) that I think my students are important or interesting enough to write to everyday. Some teachers act as though I am super-human or amazing for using the journals. When I tell them teachers all over the country are doing this, most don't believe me.

I do not think I am a fool or an amazing person. I get back everything I put into the journals, ten times over. My question is: Am I in a particularly negative building? Are these typical reactions? *Not one teacher* has ever said, "Maybe I will try that," even in a modified way. No one wants to learn more about the value or benefits. Don't teachers typically turn to each other to learn about our art? All teachers work hard; why does the perception that I am working hard shock my fellow teachers? This is the oddest thing I have encountered involving my use of dialogue journals. Any feedback would be most welcome. What do you think?

*Several weeks later Chrisanne sent this success story.*

"The special education teacher I work with has suddenly come out with some highly positive and interested comments about dialogue journals. She has observed first hand some of the values, and we have discussed them. She hasn't said anything yet about starting them herself, but...."

*Chrisanne LaHue-Johnson*
*109 West Cannon St.*
*Lafayette, CO 80026*

## NEXT ISSUES

**INTERACTIVE WRITING IN EARLY ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (SPRING 1989)**

Researchers have recently made tremendous gains in understanding the processes and development of beginning writers, but there is a great deal more to be learned. In this issue, we seek articles focusing especially on this population, and we hope that the students studied will include native English speakers, students learning English as a second language or some foreign language, "special students" (learning disabled, gifted and talented, etc.), and students at very beginning stages of literacy development. Issues addressed might include things like the following.

- How to begin a program of interactive writing with these students
- What special factors must be taken into consideration with this population
- What early writing patterns look like
- What patterns of development occur over a given period of time (like a year)
- What role technology might play in interactive writing with beginning readers and writers
- In what content areas (math, science, foreign language, etc.) dialogue journals might be used

Please send articles of 2 to 3 double spaced pages to Joy Peyton at CAL by March 15, 1989.

**INTERACTIVE WRITING IN CONTENT AREAS (FALL 1989)**

In the past couple of years, one of the central concerns of teachers and researchers has been the integration of reading and writing with academic content areas. In this issue, we will focus on the role of interactive writing for exploring, reflecting on, and learning content. We welcome articles giving a rationale for using interactive writing in content courses, describing specific programs or approaches, or summarizing research. Areas of interest might include science, math, social studies, literature, or foreign languages, at all ages and grade levels.

Please send articles of 2 to 3 double spaced typed pages, or notes of any length, to Joy Peyton at CAL by July 15, 1989.

**If you type your article using MacWrite, Ready-Set-Go, or Microsoft Word, you can send your articles on 3.25" floppy disks. Please send along a hard copy also. Thanks!**

## "We Cannot Effectively Teach Children We Do Not Know"

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This excerpt from James Britton's chapter in a forthcoming book edited by Anne Haas Dyson,* Writing and Reading: Collaboration in the Classroom, *provides a helpful and welcome discussion of dialogue journal use as written conversation. We are particularly pleased that Britton describes a teacher using a dialogue-like journal in a classroom in Ontario in 1978, just about the time our own research with Leslee Reed was beginning, further evidence that dialogue journals are truly a teacher-developed practice, aided but not created by research.*

### CONVERSATIONS ON PAPER

When teaching and learning are seen as genuinely interactive behaviors we discover that we cannot effectively teach *children we don't know*. Getting to know the children in a new group, say at the beginning of a new year, is therefore a first priority. Of course, teachers and children get to know each other primarily in face-to-face situations and the talk these promote or permit. But days are short and classes may be large — and there is no doubt that written exchange conducted in the right way can greatly assist us in getting to know the children we teach. Moreover — something we cannot underestimate — writing to this end is, for both child and teacher, writing–and–reading to a genuine social purpose.

The journal as "written conversation" between child and teacher was something I first appreciated in 1978 in Dundas School, Toronto . . . A Grade 3/Grade 4 class at Dundas in 1978 was taught by Mrs. Irwin, and one of the things the children did for her was to keep a journal, which she would read and write in as she moved around in the classroom. It was clear that journal entries were made only when you had something to say to Mrs. Irwin — and that made them interesting to read. ... I quote one or two of the entries made by Linda, a Chinese 9-year-old (the teacher's comments are shown in italics).

Friday January 20th 1978. After my rough copy of my project I am going to rearange my project around. I am going to put growing up first page. What monkeys do to eat in second page. Why do monkeys make faces page three. *Sounds interesting.*

Wednesday Jan 25. It was interesting. Did you think it is very interesting or interesting or just a little interesting? Mrs. I., I 'm sorry your husband wouldn't let you have another dog but anyways someone already took the dog. How's Malcom? I hope he isn't sick or anything. *Malcolm is fine thank you — he cries when I leave in the morning and gets very excited when I come home!* ...

Tuesday Feb 14th. The last time I wrote I told you that I was school sick and you asked me why. Well now I will tell you why, because I like to learn, I also like you, I like to do work and when I was away I miss the class. Today I am glad to be here because I wouldn't like to miss the Val- entine party. Mrs. I. can you give me a few suggests for the party. What I mean is to give me a few suggests what to bring for the party. *(1) a sharp knife to cut apples (2) serviettes (3) little bags to take goodies home in.*

* * * * * * * *

As pedagogues I think we too easily lose sight of the realistic judgment that writing that does what we meant it to do must be good writing! Linda, like others in her class, enjoyed writing her journal because it made her feel good about the way "Mrs. I." felt about her. I talked to Linda about her journal and she said, "Yes, we kinda communicate."

I think at this early stage in a writer/reader's progress the journal serves the purpose of establishing and maintaining relations between pupil and teacher. At later stages we shall demand a double purpose for the journal (as I have done in my courses for adults) and use it both to further interpersonal relationships and to encourage relaxed exploration of the material of the course in the context of the writer's own experience. For either purpose, the teacher's response — even where it may be brief — is responsible for maintaining the tone, and thereby the purpose, of the exchange.

A movement to promote such uses of the journal has come in recent years from the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington. The journal, in essentially the terms in which I have described it above, has been christened the "Dialogue Journal." Stress has rightly been put on the importance of teacher and pupil *thinking together* in the written exchanges of the journal. ... [*Taken from Technical Report No. 8, "Writing and Reading in the Classroom," James Britton, August 1987. Center for the Study of Writing.*]

***Dialogue*** *is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals and other forms of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who are using dialogue journals and other interactive writing and studying their uses in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of two National Institute of Education research grants to study dialogue journal writing with native and non-native English speakers. The newsletter is now produced with partial support from the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR), which is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the Department of Education. For information about dialogue journal research and practical applications or the work of CLEAR, write:*

**DIALOGUE, CAL**
**1118 22nd St., N.W. Washington, DC 20037.**

*Dialogue appears approximately three times a year, at a cost of $10.00 to cover duplication and mailing. Back issues from 1982-1986 are available for $7.00; from 1987 on for $5.00. Make checks payable to* Handbook Press.

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# Dialogue

Editors: Jana Staton
Joy Kreeft Peyton
Shelley Gutstein

## NEW RESEARCH ON DIALOGUE JOURNALS

*Jana Staton*

In the past two years, there has been a great increase in dialogue journal studies on an increasing variety of populations. This issue of DIALOGUE provides an update on the many new studies on dialogue journals, as a way of sharing methodologies, research interests, and where available, results.

We have included reports on studies which are just beginning as well as completed work for a particular reason: studying this kind of complex communicative event can be a lonely, isolated process, and the beginning researcher will find few "models" or standard methods to draw on. Each study is in effect a new pioneering effort. By including information on how to contact the contributors to this issue, we hope to put researchers and potential researchers with particular interests in touch with others doing similar work, so that we can all ask better questions, and improve the state of the arty of studying interactive written communication.

Reading over the articles, it is apparent that there are some continuing thorny problems intrinsic to the nature of research on dialogue journals. Among them are the difficulty of specifying outcomes in advance for any given population; the rather large degree of unpredictable variation introduced by the goals, beliefs, attitudes, and commitment of the participants; and the problems of studying an event designed to occur over an extended period of time. Our comments are intended to point out some of the difficulties we and others confront in studying such a rich, complex event.

### Issues in Specifying Outcomes for a Given Population

The issue of what specific outcomes can be expected for a given population continues to make dialogue journal research interesting. Several of the researchers in this issue point out that their original focus has changed because analysis of the data has not shown the expected outcomes occurring.

We can see two different issues involved here. The first is the appropriateness of a specific outcome for the age and initial competencies of a given population. Bahruth, in studying migrant students in fifth grade who are just beginning to acquire English literacy, reports in this issue that he found spelling gains over the school year--one measure of improvement in mastering writing mechanics. In contrast Shelton, studying the dialogue journals of her high school seniors from a wide variety of backgrounds, reports that although she remains convinced that her students' writing has improved, she cannot detect changes in grammatical and other features. It is likely that the potential effects of written dialogues on linguistic competency are constrained by the individual's prior degree of acquisition of the linguistic code. Bahruth's younger students are learning the English linguistic code for writing for the first time; Shelton's older students already have a fairly complete linguistic code, including grammatical and orthographic features, which may be at some variation, however, from standard written English use. The older student is much less likely to 'unlearn' already learned features and acquire the standard version, even with exposure to the teacher's model.

What these research studies point to is our general lack of knowledge about what outcomes in writing acquisition can be expected for any given student population. The age and linguistic background of students, and their psycho-social needs, are all factors of major importance in determining the potential range of outcomes. For example, among college students, attitude changes, motivation to study, reflective self-awareness have all proved far more likely to occur as a result of dialogue interactions than have major changes in grammatical skills.

The second issue involves understanding that even an outcome such as "writing development" is a complex phenomenon which cannot be measured by picking some visible skill (such as spelling).

Scribner and Cole, in their attempt to determine the "effects of literacy" on the development of cognitive abilities apart from the general effects of schooling itself, came to define literacy as knowing how to apply a "set of socially organized practices...for specific purposes in specific contexts of use. The nature of these practices...will determine the kinds of skills ("consequences") associated with literacy" (1981, p. 236).

So too, the dialogue journal is not a general, or universal practice, but one that is highly contextualized. The goals of the particular teacher or counselor, the needs and intentions of the individual students, and the social context in which the dialogue occurs are major factors determining potential consequences. The great variety of outcomes now being studied supports the value of identifying specific contextual requirements and participant-determined purposes which set limits on the kinds of consequences which may generally occur.

The diversity of outcomes in the studies reported in this issue reflect just this relationship between specific purposes, specific participant needs and specific outcomes. In the section

(continued from p. 1)
of studies classified as "Psychological Perspectives on Growth and Liberation," Armstrong is concerned with the occurrence of both personal and academic problem-solving at the intermediate level; Winston examines her own growth as a teacher and the accompanying liberation among her socially oppressed, low-achieving students; Redman brings to her study her purpose to know the "whole" child and therefore is adopting a Gestalt framework for analyzing the content of the dialogue exchanges. Colfer and Jensen both focus with awareness and self-reflection concerning schooling and achievement.

In contrast, a very different set of effects or outcomes, but a similar diversity is found in the section "Studies of Text and Discourse;" Harrington is examining changes in voice and metalinguistic awareness among high school students in a writing center, where writing and voice are explicit and shared topics of concern; Gutstein focuses on the much broader issue of "communicative competence"; Whisler examines the development of cohesion in a fifth-grader's dialogue texts while Albertini looks at coherence markers in the writing of deaf students. Bahruth, as mentioned, found growth in spelling for bilingual elementary students.

All of these studies contrast with the beginning literacy studies of Eddis and Macguire, Farley, and Peyton, where the teacher's concern is for the development of literacy skills, and the student's focus is on mapping thought into written language, leading to research of the acquisition of skills in using the written code.

As researchers are finding with all other kinds of written discourse, the question "What are the effects of using a dialogue journal?" does not have single, or even a set of answers, but is highly specific to the particular topics, participants and social setting in which the dialogue journals are being used.

## The Issue of Teacher Involvement and Effects

Directly bound up with the problem of deciding what outcomes or results to analyze is the need to account for the influence of the particular teacher or other adult involved in the dialogue. Dialogue journals in reality have three components: the use of writing in a shared book, the features of the dialogue (equal turns, mutual topics, etc.) and the mind and personal resources of the teacher or adult involved. A number of the studies summarized here involve researchers who are also the adult participants--Harrington, Gutstein, Shelton, Albertini, Eger, Winston, Redman, Colfer, and Jensen. A similar number involve research on other's use of dialogue journals, ranging from novice users who volunteered for the study, as in Eddis & McGuire, Smollen & Clegg, and Rueda, to more experienced teachers selected because of their mastery of dialogue journals, as in Peyton and Seyoum's study of teacher strategies using the Reed corpus, Peyton's study of beginning literacy, and Whisler's article on the development of cohesion.

While being both participant and researcher may raise classic concerns from an experimentalist's point of view, there are equal pitfalls in asking teachers who are not familiar with dialogue journal use to participate in a study in order to avoid biasing the effects. Teachers cannot be "neutral" administrators of dialogue journal communication in some standardized way--as was intended in the traditional research studies Leslee Reed describes in her article. The teachers' values, beliefs, interest, and attitudes toward each student are an essential and unstandardized part of the communication, and will influence the outcomes in a major way. Thus Rueda found that even selecting teachers with similar "strong interest in writing instruction," and providing the same training and preparation, did not eliminate much of the variance.

The effects of dialogue journal participation on the teacher in fact must be documented, and the teacher's goals and values studied in relation to his/her characteristic way of interacting with students in the written dialogues, before one can know what outcomes to expect. A further problem comes in that the purposes and responses of the teacher are not even fully knowable by the researcher in advance, and thus not predictable until the dialogues are completed. Despite our best efforts, complex human interactions of which dialogue journals are one instance, remain understandable and analyzable only after the fact because of the lack of control we can exert over human participants. Appropriately, Smollen and Clegg have begun their study of dialogue journal use with a descriptive analyses of teachers' strategies before seeking to determine the effects of specific strategies on the responses of LEP students.

## The Issue of Time

Dialogue journals by their nature are deeply embedded in the ongoing, extended time periods of classroom or daily life. They are not designed to be a "quick fix," or a focused change program producing the same results for all students. From all we know, they have been most successful when used continuously from the beginning to the end of the shared relationship-context, whether a quarter, semester, or year. Some of the research studies completed and underway have had to struggle with severe time limitations. In the real world in which research studies must be conducted, both research committees and the researcher's resources sometimes dictate that the researcher allow only a very brief period of time for data collection. The difficulty comes in assuming that one can detect growth or change within a short time frame, ignoring that, as the practice has been used by teachers and others, it has occurred over the longest extent of time possible.

To ensure ecological validity, the actual practice must have an adequate amount of time to become established, even if only small samples are needed for the purpose of research.

The issue of the time frame for actual dialogue use (as distinguished from samples of data to study that use), is compounded by the general finding that it takes a teacher who has not used continuous written communication of this sort from six months to a full year to become comfortable with this kind of mediated conversational interaction. Until teachers are comfortable and able to use fully their resources--cognitive, affective, linguistic--in managing interactions with the students, it is risky to study the interactions themselves, particularly to search for "effects" or "change." (One could very fruitfully study the process of teacher growth and change as revealed in the dialogue interactions--a study that is still looking for more researchers!)

These comments are only to remind us of the myriad, powerful factors which directly influence what happens in any

(continued from p. 2)
given dialogue exchange. The studies in this issue are a healthy mixture of empirical descriptive analyses of dialogue journal use in various settings and more focused outcome studies. We hope that this mixture continues, to provide a much-needed descriptive knowledge base about dialogue journal use at different ages, for different purposes. The studies also refute the simplistic division of research into quantitative or qualitative, by integrating quantitative, empirical analyses including correlational studies, to test the strength of relationships observed by qualitative analyses.

I come back at the end to the nature of dialogue itself--as something very different than an assignment, or other teacher or school directed practice. Each student enters the dialogue with a different set of needs, purposes, and concerns, and the dialogue leaves ample room for these to influence the direction and topics discussed, even when the teacher establishes a particular focus. If one attempts to "simplify" or control the practice too much, in order to meet the dictates of a research method rather than letting the research be "data driven," the chances of finding significant patterns decreases markedly. Most of the studies now ongoing having been successful in challenging traditional, but unworkable methods and have preserved the ecological validity and integrity of the dialogue journal use itself, providing us even in these brief summaries with a rich picture of dialogue journal applications and benefits, and raising many new questions for further investigation.

Scribner, S. and Cole, M. (1981). The Psychology of Literacy. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

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## NOW AVAILABLE!

## QUESTION-ANSWER SHEET ON DIALOGUE JOURNALS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS

This four-page fact sheet is an excellent overview of dialogue journal use with ESL students that can be used to introduce teachers to the practice, as a handout at conference presentations, or as a basis for discussion in workshops. In an easy-to-read, question-answer format, it describes the practice and the rationale behind dialogue journal use, with guidelines for getting started. Questions discussed are

- What is a dialogue journal?
- What are the benefits to students and teachers?
- How much time is involved?
- With what kinds of students can dialogue journals be used?
- How do I get started?

It includes a list of dialogue journal publications and suggestions for further reading.

For multiple copies, free of charge, write to:
Bill Code, User Services Coordinator, ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, 1118 22nd Street, N.W., Washington, DC, 20037

## ANALYSES OF TEACHER STRATEGIES

## TEACHER STRATEGIES AND THEIR EFFECT ON STUDENT WRITING

*Joy Kreeft Peyton and Mulugetta Seyoum*
Center for Applied Lnguistics

In a manual on teacher questioning, Hyman (1979) states, "It is impossible to conceive of teaching without asking questions." Studies of interaction in classrooms with native and nonnative English-speaking students show that question-asking is the most frequent act performed by the teacher, occupying as much as 95% of teacher talk. Questions usually serve to establish and maintain teacher control and conversational domination, because they guide the course of the interaction.

When teachers begin to think about writing in dialogue journals, questions seem to be one powerful option for accomplishing their goals. Teachers want students to write freely and to extend and elaborate on topics, and often see their role in the dialogue as promoting student writing. But what is the best way to do that? Should dialogue journal interaction take the same form as much classroom interaction, with the teacher initiating writing topics for students or with students writing about self-chosen topics and the teacher asking a series of questions after each student entry to show interest and to elicit more writing? Our observations of dialogue journal writing over the past few years indicate that this is the idea many teachers begin with. We have seen dialogue journal interactions in which the teacher's primary contribution is to ask questions. We have also observed, or heard from teachers, albeit informally, that student writing in response to those questions is often brief and even elliptical, a simple answer to the question. In these cases, the writing takes on the quality of an interview consisting of teacher questions, brief student responses and then more teacher questions.

We have become interested, therefore, in the role of teacher strategies for responding, particularly the use of *(cont. p. 4)*

## A HOPEFUL TALE FOR CREATIVE (BUT DISCOURAGED) RESEARCHERS

God looked down upon the world recently and was perplexed at the confusion and complexity. God decided that in order to know more about the problem research was necessary, as a step toward understanding and action. So God applied to the National Science Foundation for a grant. After six months, a letter came back rejecting the proposal for the following reasons:

a) The applicant hasn't done any new, creative work since the last (first) project;

b) No one has been able to replicate the applicant's work:

c) None of the applicant's publications have appeared in refereed journals.

[With thanks to Peter Strevens, Director of the Bell-Foundation in England, who shared this tale at the 1987 Georgetown Roundtable on Languages and Linguistics.]

(continued from p. 3)
questions in dialogue journal writing. We decided to study the strategies that one experienced and successful dialogue journal teacher, Leslee Reed, uses in her dialogue journal writing, focusing on her use of questions. We addressed three questions: What are the strategies that this teacher uses in her dialogue journal writing? Does teacher strategy affect student writing? Do teacher strategy and student response vary according to student English proficiency/academic performance? Since she has had a great deal of success with dialogue journals during her 20+ years using them, we considered Leslee Reed's writing a worthwhile object of study, a possible model for other teachers. By studying the writing of only one teacher, we could examine the effect of different strategies while holding the teacher constant.

We studied a three-week sample of dialogue journal writing of 12 students in Leslee Reed's sixth grade class, all nonnative English speakers. We grouped them as "high," "mid," and "low" performing, based on English language proficiency, scores on the Reading and Language sections of the Survey of Essential Skills Test administered near the end of their sixth-grade school year, and teacher judgment. The three-week dialogue journal sample was taken in the spring, in March and April, after they had been writing in the journals for around 7 months. This allowed time for the students to become experienced with this kind of writing, for the teacher to get to know each student, and for patterns of interaction to become established.

## Teacher strategies

We first examined topic initiation and response patterns in the teacher's and students' entries. For each entry, we delimited topic domains and then determined for each topic whether the writer was initiating it or was responding to a topic written about previously by the other writer. We found, as has been documented in previous studies of the dialogue journal writing of this teacher (Kreeft, et al., 1984; Morroy, 1985; Staton, et al., in press), that she primarily took the role of respondent to, rather than initiator of, topics in her writing, thus giving the students topic control. Most of the topics she wrote about (around 75%) occurred in response to topics the students had written about in their previous entry.

Next, we looked at the strategies she used when she wrote about a given topic. Here, we were primarily interested in the use of questions, which directly elicit student writing, versus "personal contributions," statements and comments which make no such elicitation. Therefore, we coded each of her topics as consisting of a question or a number of questions only ("How do you like our sign? Do you think we will finish it on time?"), personal contributions only ("Getting the shot was important. I hope your hands feels better now."), or a combination of questions and personal contributions ("How is your science project coming? It looked like you and Willie were getting a lot done today. I'm sure we'll enjoy hearing your report."). We found that asking questions alone, with no accompanying contribution to the topic, was something she did very rarely (11% of the time). Her most frequent strategy was to make personal contributions, used 60% of the time. When she did ask questions, she usually embedded them in her own contributions (a strategy used 28% of the time--see Table 1), as in this response to a student's writing about a hen.

Claudia: *my hen has some white lines in her dirt of her body that throws up by a hole. I don't know what you call it. She has wat it looks like worms, but little worms those white ugly worms & they are very skiny, what are they? do you know how to get the hen of her stomach sickness or is it usual for her to be like that...*
*oh poor hen she cooks & coocks when I say pretty hen in a low low voice & she looks like she is used to children because she is cook & cooking when I say pretty things, oh she's so nice!!!!*

Mrs. Reed: *It is normal for the feces (the waste from your hen's body) to have white lines in it. I've never heard of a hen having worms--but it is possible. Go to a pet shop and ask them or to a veterinarian. Who gave you the hen? Maybe they will know. We say a hen clucks. It is a pleasant little sound as though they are happy. They cackle when they lay an egg! That is usually loud! Does your hen cackle?*
*I think hens like having people or other hens around, don't you?* (Emphasis added.)

Table 1. Teacher strategies.

| Contribution Only | | Contribution + Question | | Question Only | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | % | N | % | N | % | |
| 334 | 61% | 153 | 28% | 59 | 11% | 546 |

In the dialogue journal interaction, this teacher responded as an authentic participant in the writing event, rather than simply as a questioners. She was involved not simply in eliciting writing, but in writing herself.

## Student response to teacher strategies

To determine whether different teacher strategies had a differential effect on student writing, we looked at the frequency of student response to the various strategies used by the teacher--when the teacher used a strategy to write about a topic, how frequently did the students write about that topic in the following turn? We found that questions, whether occurring alone or in combination with personal contributions, resulted in a topically related student response more frequently than personal contributions with no accompanying request, as shown in Table 2. Therefore, it appears that as in oral conversation, questions have the power to elicit a response.

Table 2. Frequency of student response to teacher strategies.

| Contribution Only | Contribution + Question | Question Only |
|---|---|---|
| 85/334 25% | 95/154 62% | 34/59 58% |

However, although questions tended to elicit more frequent

(continued from p. 4)
responses, they did not necessarily elicit more writing. At times, the student's response consisted of only a brief answer to the question with no elaboration, as in this example:

Teacher: *Oh, my! What happened in your math? Would you like some help?*
Simon: *I do not know. No I do not.*

For the students rated "high-performing," considerably more writing occurred in response to contributions or a combination of contributions and questions than in response to questions alone. Table 3 shows the mean number of words written in response to teacher strategies. Of course, quantity of writing is not necessarily an indication of writing quality, but since these students were required to write only three sentences a day, the actual quantity of their responses is an indication of desire and willingness to write.

Table 3. Mean number of words in student responses to teacher strategies

| | Question Only | Contribution Only | Contribution+ Question |
|---|---|---|---|
| Highs | 25.8 | 49.2 | 73.3 |
| Mids | 30.0 | 32.0 | 31.1 |
| Lows | 15.6 | 16.5 | 18.5 |

The means shown here do not reflect the variability in length of responses in individual entries, which is considerable. There are no doubt other factors besides teacher strategy which also influence amount of student writing. One such factor seems to be topic. At times, it doesn't seem to matter what the teacher does in her writing. If a student is interested in a topic, he or she will write about it extensively However, teacher strategy does seem to exert some influence.

**Variation in teacher strategies and student responses related to student proficiency/ achievement level**

Finally, we found no variation in the strategies the teacher used with the three student groups. This is probably because we were taking a very broad look at the teacher's writing strategies in this study. Kreeft et al. (1984) did find variation in both interactional and syntactic features of this teacher's writing, related to the English language proficiency level of the student. We did, however, find variation in student responses to strategies, the "highs" writing more in response to teacher contributions than in response to questions occurring alone. With the "mids" and "lows", questions alone tended to elicit the same amount of writing as other strategies. It may have been that the "highs" were more attuned to the teacher's writing and were inspired to write by her contributions.

**Discussion**

In this study of teacher strategies, we found that the predominant strategy of this teacher is to respond to topics the students initiate and to make contributions herself rather than to simply elicit student writing with questions. This teacher is clearly acting more as a collaborator with her students in a cooperative writing event than as an outsider who simply elicits and promotes writing. We also found that although questions do elicit a response, they do not necessarily result in more student writing; and with the high-performing students, they lead to considerably less writing. The success with dialogue journals that this teacher has experienced for promoting student writing may lie precisely in their collaborative quality.

Hyman, R. T. (1979). Strategic questioning. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Kreeft, J., Shuy, R.W., Staton, J., Reed, L., & Morroy, R. (1984). Dialogue writing: Analysis of student-teacher interactive writing in the learning of English as a second language (Final report to NIE, Grant No. NIE-G-83-0030). Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics. (ERIC No. ED 252 097)

Morroy, R. (1985). Teacher strategies: Linguistic devices for sustaining interaction in dialogue journal writing. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Georgetown University, Washington, DC.

Staton, J., Shuy, R. W., Peyton, J. K., & Reed, L. (in press). Dialogue journal communication: Classroom, linguistic, social, and cognitive views. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

*Dr. Mulugetta Seyoum, consultant to the Dialogue Journal project, initiated and helped conduct the analysis on this study.*

## RESEARCH ON TEACHER APPROACHES AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL

*Cynthia Shelton*
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My research for the Teacher/Researcher project at UCLA began as a study to show that writing in the dialogue journals improved my high school students' writing skills, but after six months of looking at my data, I can't substantiate that claim, at least with the measures I was using. Too many students repeat the same errors for the whole year for me to show statistically validated improvement. I still believe that journals improve writing fluidity and attitudes, but fluidity in writing and attitudes toward writing are so affected by everything else that goes on in my classes, that I don't think I can prove how much the dialogue journals are contributing.

My research now will focus on: (1) the "how to" of using dialogue journals in a secondary class; (2) the pitfalls, such as students who refuse to write, those who don't want to turn in the journal because they use it as a private diary, those who insist on writing to "dear journal" and talk about me as a third person, and the problems of learning things about the students that I'd rather not know; (3) the kinds of teacher responses that make students respond in greater quantity and greater depth.

The audience for this product, part of an anthology of research produced by the UCLA Teacher/ Researcher project, will be primarily teachers who have not tried dialogue journals--a much different audience than regular readers of DIALOGUE. I hope to produce material that can be used for teacher training and for conference presentations.

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## AN EXAMINATION OF TEACHER ENTRIES IN DIALOGUE JOURNALS

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The purpose of this study is to examine the kinds of questions and comments teachers use in dialogue journals and their effect on the development of writing skills of Indochinese and Hispanic limited English proficient (LEP) students.

Previous research by Hudelson (1984) and Kreeft (1984) has suggested that dialogue journal writing can be beneficial in promoting the writing skills of LEP students. Dialogue journal writing allows students to write freely in a non-corrective, non-threatening situation. Krashen and Terrell (1983) have found that a low anxiety classroom environment is very important for promoting language acquisition.

The study was conducted over a four-month period in an urban school setting in the Midwest. Eighteen LEP elementary students, each taught by an ESL teacher, ranging from beginning to intermediate level proficiency, participated in the study.

The teachers were given a brief introduction by the researchers to dialogue journal writing. They were not told what kinds of comments to write in the students' journals. However, they were told not to correct the students' writing. The students wrote daily in bound notebooks on any topic they wished. The teachers responded consistently to the students' entries in the notebooks with comments, questions, and information.

After the four month period an examination of the notebook entries was made to discover the types of responses teachers made to students' writing. Three major categories were revealed: comments, questions, and directives. The comments included praise, general statements about self and the students' message, and critical comments. The questions were of three types: restrictive (either/or and yes/no), WH questions (requesting specific information) and open-ended questions ("What did you do over the weekend?"). The third category, directives, included requests for further information, such as: "Tell me about your birthday present."

An in-depth analysis of five of the journals, randomly selected, revealed the following teacher entries occurred most frequently: general comments (39.5%), WH questions asking for specific information (26%), and restrictive questions (13.6%). The two types of teacher entries that occurred least frequently were critical comments (2.1%) and open-ended questions (2.7%).

The next step of the research will be to determine the effect of different types of teacher comments and questions on the development of students' writing, specifically on their ability to elaborate on a topic, interact with the reader, and express ideas clearly.

Hudelson, Sarah. (1984). Kan yu ret an rayt en Ingles! children become literate in English as a second language. Tesol Quarterly. 18(2): 221-238.

Krashen, Stephen D. & Tracy D. Terrell. (1983). The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

## TEACHER STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING LANGUAGE LEARNING AND THINKING

*Cassie Huffman*
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The goal of my work (a Master's project) is to show that dialogue journals are one way to enhance students language learning and thinking in a "community of readers and writers." Frank Smith, Jerry Harste, Donald Graves, and Ken and Yetta Goodman all stress that the processes of reading, writing and thinking can best be developed in a literate environment where speaking, reading, writing, and thinking are integrated.

I believe that dialogue journal reading and writing can provide this literate environment because it is authentic, collaborative, holistic communication where the focus is on meaning. The major product of my work will be a description of teacher response strategies in dialogue journal writing which foster communication and learning. I am analyzing examples of students' and my own writing to chronicle my development as a responder over a two-year time span. I am also preparing a questionnaire for teachers to help them decide if dialogue journals will work for them.

This is my second year of using dialogue journals with fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students in a pull-out, compensatory education Reading Lab. My students, native and nonnative English users, test in reading at the thirtieth percentile or lower using the California Test of Basic Skills. The students come to Lab four days a week, forty-five minutes each day. I use an integrated approach to reading, where the focus is on meaning, and the emphasis is on cooperation and sharing to develop a community of learners.

*Note: Cassie Huffman spent the months of February and March recovering from an operation, and writes: "The wonderful thing about dialogue journals is that I'm still communicating with my students through them even though I'm not at school. This definitely fits the criteria of authenticity!"*

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**NEXT ISSUE: Classroom Management and Behavior**

DIALOGUE's summer/fall issue will discuss the various uses of dialogue journals to help teachers with classroom management and behavior, student motivation, and attitudes--both recent research and reports from teachers. We would like to have contributions from anyone who has insights, research or comments on this topic--deadline is July 1, 1987.

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*(Examination of Teacher Entries, cont.)*

Kreeft, Joy. (1984). Dialogue writing: Bridge from talk to essay writing. Language Arts. 61(2).

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*University of Akron, Akron, OH 44324*

# TEACHER INPUT STRATEGIES IN MICROCOMPUTER- BASED INTERACTIVE WRITING WITH LEARNING DISABLED STUDENTS

*Robert Rueda*
University of Southern California

The present study is a descriptive investigation of special education teachers' use of microcomputer-based interactive writing software with learning disabled students. The study incorporates a theoretically meaningful approach to writing instruction using the technology of the computer in an interactive writing situation. This investigation describes the type of teacher input in microcomputer-based dialogue journal writing and documents frequency of use. A further goal was to develop hypotheses regarding the most effective teacher strategies in this type of writing.

The theoretical framework for this research provides a basis for designing writing instruction for any novice learners, and provides support for understanding the potential value of teacher-student interactive writing. Cognitive/Developmental theories suggest that the role of the teacher should be to facilitate writing as a developmental process, in which children experience changing understandings and uses of print and writing. Further, instruction must be based on the limited processing capacities of the novice and/or handicapped writers, minimizing where possible the low-level production problems associated with complex writing tasks. Functional/ Interactional theories, concerned primarily with the social and interactional aspects of writing, stress (1) the role of social interaction with "more capable others" as a prime factor in development and learning, (2) the importance of providing authentic, meaningful, and functional tasks in learning to write, and (3) encouraging attempts to bridge from present levels of oral proficiency to future desired levels of written proficiency.

Eight special education teachers and two regular classroom teachers were trained to use specially created software designed to permit dialogue journal writing through the computer. Each teacher then selected three to four students to work with. All of the special education students (N=24) were learning disabled, while the students in the regular classroom settings (N=7) were not. One additional special education teacher wrote dialogue journals with four students using a word processor with no special software, and with four more using paper and pencil. All 39 students in the study were between grades four and six. The period of the study was approximately three months.

The printed journal entries for each teacher-student dyad were collected and each teacher completed several questionnaires as part of the data collection process. These included a computer knowledge and use questionnaire, a computer literacy measure, a self-rating of skills measure and a questionnaire assessing the teacher's theoretical orientation to writing. The teachers were also interviewed at length regarding their strategies in writing to the students, the use of the software, and the students' writing behavior. Participating students also completed several questionnaires.

The analysis of the dialogue journal writing consisted of two major parts. First, student and teacher writing was analyzed for structural features such as fluency and complexity. Second, because dialogue journals are meant to take advantage of students' existing language and conversational abilities, an analysis was conducted of extended topic chains defined here as the maintenance of a common topic over more than one journal entry. Two types of extended topic chains were classified. "Initiating chains" are those where the teacher initiated the topic. "Sustaining chains" are those where the student initiated the topic but the teacher's response led to a continuation of the topic by the student. Finally, teacher entries in either of the topic chain types were coded as to the type of language function or "local strategy" the teacher used in her writing.

## Results

Teachers exhibited a great deal of variation in the frequency with which they engaged in the journal writing and in the amount they wrote to individual students. This was surprising because the teachers had been selected for the study based on their strong interest in writing instruction, and had been coached in the virtues of daily journal writing. The variation in the amount of text generated was due in small part to the accessibility of the computers, but correlated more highly to the teachers' level of computer literacy, their rating of the software, and to their theoretical orientation to writing.

Analysis of the journal texts revealed that the teachers wrote much more than the students did. The majority of the extended topic chains were "initiating chains" (initiated by the teacher). Teachers used the local strategies of reporting personal facts, reporting general facts, reporting opinions/ expressing feelings most frequently with this type of topic chain. Sustaiining chains (introduced by the student) were much less frequent. Teachers used requests for personal information, reporting opinions/expressing feelings and requests for general information as local strategies in sustaining chains.

Teacher questions were also analyzed. Yes/No questions did not produce extended topic chains. Interestingly, in contrast to traditional oral classroom interaction, teachers employed very few "known answer" questions and few Initiation-Reply- Evaluation sequences in the journals. The regular class teachers produced fewer entries and fewer topic chains than the special education teachers did. Other than this, there were few differences between the two groups of teachers.

The study suggests that there were wide differences in the abilities of the teachers to successfully develop extended written interactions with mildly handicapped students. Those teachers who engaged in "interactive" and/or "personalizing" strategies such as self disclosure, asking personal and meaningful questions, etc., appeared to be the most successful in producing student responses and extended topic chains.

This work demonstrates that microcomputers can be successfully used for activities other than independent student-centered drill and practice, with learning disabled as well as regular students. However, teacher computer literacy and teachers' theoretical orientation to the teaching of writing are seen as critical elements to the success of these innovative uses of the computer. Most importantly, the *(cont. p. 9)*

## GIFTED CHILDREN & INTERACTIVE WRITING

*Jack Farley*
Murray State University

Hearing-impaired students, mentally retarded students (Farley, 1985), bilingual students, and non-exceptional students have all demonstrated their abilities to discuss personally relevant topics in written language with their teachers who act as interested, responding audiences. However, the efficacy of using dialogue journals with gifted students has not been documented. The following investigation documents one dialogue writing experience between a father and his gifted daughter.

The documented learning styles of gifted children and the characteristics for maintaining dialogue journal interactions are uniquely compatible: gifted children are seen as dynamic communicators and dialogue journal writing is viewed as a dynamic approach to communication. Table 1 lists some characteristics of gifted children (Herward & Orlansky, 1980) compared to characteristics of dialogue journal communication (Staton, et al, 1982).

Table 1. Comparison of the Behaviors of Gifted Children Characteristics of Interactive Writing

| Behaviors of the Gifted | Characteristics of interactive writing |
|---|---|
| 1. Expresses ideas and feelings well. | 1. Allows for personally relevant expression |
| 2. Can move at a rapid pace | 2. Offers daily opportunites to use writing |
| 3. Wants to learn, explore, and seek more information | 3. Interactions with others for learning, exploration, and ample opportunity to obtain more information |
| 4. Develops broad knowledge and an extensive store of vicarious experiences | 4. Interactions possible on a wide variety of topics and experiences |
| 5. Is sensitive to the feelings and rights of others | 5. Dialogue informs each other's feelings |
| 6. Makes steady progress | 6. Frequent interactions allow for progress |
| 7. Makes original and stimulating contributions to discussions | 7. Dialogue can occur on any topic |
| 8. Sees relationships easily | 8. Interaction offers opportunities to discuss relationships |
| 9. Is able to use reading skills to obtain new information | 9. Interactions employ both reading and writing |
| 10. Requires little drill for learning | 10. Avoids a drill approach to learning written expression |

If we are going to offer gifted young authors meaningful writing experiences, we cannot limit writing experiences to handwriting, spelling, and grammar drills. Innovative writing experiences are needed for the population of gifted children who are learning to write. Although the use of interactive writing with gifted students remains to be thoroughly investigated, the following describes one case study of a gifted five year old child who maintained a dialogue journal with her father. The practices of this child indicate that further investigation of interactive writing with gifted children should be explored.

### A Gifted Five Year Old Writing with her Father

Marie was a gifted five year old child (IQ 135) when she began to keep a dialogue journal with her father. Marie's father gave her a notebook and asked her to write whatever she wished. He then wrote a response to Marie's writing, and they exchanged their dialogue journal back and forth several times a week. Marie's beginning journal writing efforts included a conglomeration of pictures, name writing, copying of her father's writinag, and invented spelliangs as can be seen in Figure 1. (Note: The Last Unicorn was one of Marie's favorite films.)

Figure 1. Marie and her father's Dialogue Journal Writing

Marie's dialogue journal writing practices were interesting. She would spend up to 20 minutes in producing a single journal entry, carefully combining her print with a related picture. Once her father produced his entry, she was capable of taking her journal writing "turn" and writing independently.

Marie was particularly fascinated with producing humorous journal entries and encouraged her father to do the same. She would often write of her affection for her father and other family members with entries like, "I love you daddy" and "I love mmomy Judy (her sister) bog (dog)." Marie was also avidly interested in discussing her kindergarten lessons. Her writing development in the journal was steady.

Both Marie's drawings and written language refined as she continued to maintain a dialogue journal with her father. Although her earliest journal efforts evidenced no punctuation applied, her writing soon included periods. Like all young writers, she made use of invented spellings for unfamiliar words. After discussing "spring" at school she wrote, "Sprer I like." After observing a favorite television program, she wrote

(continued from p. 8)
"I like tlve" and drew a picture of a television showing her favorite program.

Neither Marie nor her father were deterred in maintaining written communication because of Marie's initial limitations in producing conventionally "correct" written language. Marie continued to show improvement in her writing performance though she did not receive directed structural or mechanical practice. Marie would model her father's conventional written language, changing her writing "errors" to match her father's model.

Marie's enthusiasm for dialogue journal w.iting surpassed her father's. She was frequently ready and willing to write in her journal and demanded that her father write his entries in order to maintain his end of the dialogue. She was always curious to read what he had written and interested in responding to his entries. Marie's enthusiasm for writing in her dialogue journal has continued in first grade (at the time of this article).

For the gifted child, dialogue journals offer writers opportunities to discuss a wide variety of topics, and gifted writers doubtlessly have a plethora of topics to bring to written discussion. Dialogue journals offer writers experiences in both reading and writing messages of personal interest and thus avoid reading and writing in a drill fashion. Dialogue journals offer opportunities to use writing for communication, not simply for structural practice. The communicative abilities of gifted children should be nurtured in a natural fashon and not purposelessly practiced to the point of ennui. Increasingly, theorists of written communication are emphasizing that if gifted children are to be encouraged to seek this learning, educators and parents should concern themselves with makng sure this learning is available. Interactive writing is an underinvestigated approach to serving the gifted. Perhaps we can gain a greater understanding of gifted individuals if we offer the gifted regular opportunities to express themselves in written language.

[A more indepth discussion of this investigation will appear in the Journal for the Education of the Gifted in 1987)].

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*( Teacher Input continued from p. 7)*
study also suggests that the social and interactional aspects of beginning writing activities are a key part of engaging students in the writing process.

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## BEGINNING LITERACY

### THIS REAL WRITING, WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

*Nancy Eddis & Mary Maguire*
*with Freda Browns, Laurel Chin &*
*Louise Lariviere*
McGill University

"This real writing, I think I'm getting it now," remarked Joshua, a first grader who had been trying his hand at dialogue journal writing for about two weeks. "It takes time to write a story, you know," he continued, "I did all this writing for myself."

These remarks were made to me as I was reading the latest dialogue journal entries of some children involved in a study which is in progress in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. The study will answer the question: Do dialogue journals enhance the language development of inner-city children? Mary Maguire, Director of the Reading Centre, McGill University, is the principal researcher in this project, with research assistants Nancy Eddis, Louise Lariviere, Freda Browns, and classroom teacher, Laurel Chin.

At this state in the project, we are still collecting data (i.e., dialogue journals, classroom observations and interviews with the school principal, the classroom teacher and the children.) This grade one classroom has nineteen children of many different ethnic origins. The diversity of ethnic populations in this classroom reflects the community in which these children live. The children's dialogue journals are being analyzed quantitatively using Halliday's cohesion and analysis (Halliday and Hasan, 1976) and a modified version of language function analysis (Staton, Shuy, Kreeft & Reed, 1982). Our final report will also include descriptive case studies of a selected sample of children and the classroom context from which these dialogue journals emerged.

As observer participants, the following example typifies my interactions with the children during journal writing time in the classroom. "How do you spell haunted house?", queried Veronique during a pre-Halloween session. "How does it start?", I ask. "Oh, with an h, but what comes next?" "Just write what you think," I comment. "But what colour is a haunted house?", she perseveres. "Well, what colour is yours?", I ask. "Black," she answers immediately and confidently returns to her desk to work on her creation.

When the research team visited the grade one classroom in September, it was immediately apparent to us that Laurel, the classroom teacher, had a warm, caring rapport with the children. At the beginning, however, Laurel did not understand the concept of dialogue journals. She was using a language experience approach and was more skills oriented; she would take dictation from each child, printing the messages in their "dialogue journals." After an explanation of the dialogue approach, Laurel changed her mode of responding to the children. She told the children that since they were doing so well, they were now ready to write on their own. Through the short period of discomfort experienced by some of the children, Laurel's firmly expressed expectation that each child could write enabled the children to feel like Joshua, who remarked, "I

think I'm getting it now." It was then that the "real" writing and dialogue began for the children.

This project is proving to be even more interesting than we had anticipated because of a number of unforeseen events. At one point, Laurel had surgery and was out of school for a month. Her replacement, although given directions, found difficulty controlling her urge to correct spelling and use the red pen on the children's writing. In order to keep continuity in the project, the children wrote letters to Laurel and she replied, so that their dialogues could continue. The first set of letters reflected the substitute teacher's model of language learning in that the letters were short and there were no spelling errors. After a gentle reminder to the replacement teacher, the second set of letters arrived and were "untouched by teacher hands!"

As we continue the project, we feel confident that the data will support the position that dialogue journals enhance the children's language development. Two examples illustrate our view. Laurel wrote, as part of a response to Nicole's letter, "You are a wonderful writer!" Nicole's next letter to Laurel commented, "Your letter was dynamite!"

As I was returning the dialogue journals after xeroxing the entries for the day, Joshua looked at me in a distressed manner and said, "I forgot what I wrote about today." I took his journal to him and as he reflected on his writing he said, "Oh, yes I remember now, it was about the transformers changing into chameleons."

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## New Study of Dialogue Journals in Family Communication

*Jana Staton*

I am beginning a long-term project to study families who use some kind of systematic writing as one way of maintaining and enhancing communication between parents and children. Writing might be in the form of a dialogue journal, note-passing (if is really two-way and not just parental directives), or a continuous exchange of letters. I am beginning by interviewing families (parents and children) who may have tried this--whether successfully or not--within driving distance of Washington, D.C., and by corresponding or talking on the phone with other families at greater distance. I am most interested in families who have used writing for communication and problem-solving rather than specifically for literacy development, although this may be a delightful side benefit. I want to document difficulties and failures as well as successes, in order to learn as much as possible. I would appreciate hearing from parents or from any readers who can provide leads. Please call or write Jana Staton, CAL, 1118 22nd St., N.W., Washington, DC 20037, (202) 429-9292, and leave a number/address where I can reach you.

## BEGINNING AT THE BEGINNING: FIRST GRADERS LEARN TO READ AND WRITE

*Joy Kreeft Peyton*
Center for Applied Linguistics

As part of a larger study of the writing development of limited English proficient students now in progress at the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR), Ruth Sedei, a teacher in Arlington County, Virginia, and I are studying the use of dialogue journals with her first grade class. Approximately half of her students are Hispanics and about half, Asian. They were around 6 years old at the beginning of the school year. All are in various stages of learning English as a second language, and most didn't know any English at the begining of the year. Some had never held a pencil before entering this class.

Ruth had found dialogue journals to be very successful in previous years, especially as a means for communicating with the heterogeneous student population in her classes, all of whom were limited English proficient. However, she had never used them with students who were so young, whose familiarity with English was so elementary, and who had had so little exposure to print. So we began by feeling our way through the implementation and the research, armed with her past successes and a considerable body of research about dialogue journals, but with a feeling of adventure and newness, and with many, many questions. We are still in the process of answering these questions, but have learned a lot during the past 6 months. The questions we touch on here are: How can the practice of dialogue journal writing be implemented with this group of students? What resources do students developing beginning literacy use for their writing? How is the writing scaffolded for the students? How does the students' writing develop over time?

### Implementing dialogue journals with first graders learning ESL

Since the students had little or no English fluency at the beginning of the year, Ruth waited until they had been in school for one month before starting dialogue journals, so they would have some oral language base on which to build. They were each given a bound notebook with primary-spaced lines, and were told they could draw or write or both, whatever they preferred. During the first month, all students chose to draw a picture to accompany what they wrote. Some only drew, and that was fine too. They have the first 15 minutes of each day to write, a schedule that gives them a feeling of continuity and routine. Later in the morning there is a long period of time dedicated to individual work---reading, writing, and drawing--and those who haven't completed their journal continue before going on to their other work. This is Ruth's time to work with the journals as well. At the beginning of the year she called each student up to discuss what they had written or drawn. They read or explained their entry and Ruth wrote back immediately, reading aloud as she wrote. Then they read the entry aloud together. Now, 6 months later, all students are writing and able to read most of what they have written; with help, they can all read what she writes. Some students no longer come up to her at all, but read her responses and write

*(continued from p. 10)*
their entries without help.

**Resources for writing**

Sometimes we teachers and researchers exaggerate our own importance in our students' learning, thinking that without our plans and help they won't learn. The first day I visited the class, after the students had had their journals for about a week, I was very busy rushing around to "help" everyone write. I was eager to see the project "work," and was suddenly afraid it wasn't going to. I even wondered if we'd made a mistake by starting with the journals. How were these kids going to write when they didn't know how? They didn't even know English! Fortunately, these factors didn't seem to bother them! They simply decided what they wanted to say and then looked for the means to say it.

My first day in class was also Iris' first day. She knew no English at all. When I stopped by her desk, she was drawing some flowers in her journal, with a strip of green at the bottom of the page. "What are you drawing?" I asked in Spanish. "This is my garden," she said in Spanish. "How do you write 'flor' (flower)?" I told her and she wrote flor above her garden. Ruth and I decided that as long as I was there to help her, Iris could write in Spanish. When I returned the next week, she was still drawing gardens and flowers. But this time she wrote flower above her picture. When I stopped by, she pointed up to a chart on the wall by her desk. There, to illustrate the letter f, was the word flower. So much for writing in Spanish. She had found her own resource for her writing and her resource was in English.

I had never realized how full the world is of print; especially the world of a first grade classroom. Signs on the walls, notes on the blackboard, books and Pictionaries on the shelves, and self-made alphabetical lists of "Words I use a lot," all are resources for writing. Little pieces of crumpled paper with words written on them come out of pockets. Someone went to K-Mart over the weekend and, knowing he would want to write about it on Monday, brought in the part of the bag that had K-Mart printed on it. As the writing in the journals accumulates, the students often look back at theirs and the teacher's previous entries, as a foundation for new entries.

**Scaffolding student writing**

Our goal is that the students be able to write an extended piece of text about a topic that is stated clearly and elaborated on, and that over time they develop in their ability to choose and write about topics and to approximate standard written English. We believe that to do that, they need a great deal of freedom; we watch and gently nudge. Determining where they are and helping them advance involves a complex and careful process of "kid watching." The year began with whole-class discussions about what might go in the journals. But rates and types of development cannot be predetermined or applied to all students at once. They often must be decided on a student-by-student basis, and most of our attempts to move the writing along take place in individual discussions while they write or when they read their journals with Ruth. A student who writes "I like ____ " day after day may need to be asked to write about something else---"things you like to do, think about, or wish for." At the same time, writing "I like _____" may be a new and important stage of development for another student. Some students need to learn to seek out and copy words they need. Others, who have been busy gathering and using sight words since the first day of class, need to take risks with spelling and to sound words out. With some, who write only one or two brief sentences and close their journals, we talk and ask questions about what they have written, encouraging them to elaborate so we can understand their points. Others, who write long entries very rapidly, are encouraged to stop, think about, and plan what they want to say, and are assured that length is not all-important.

With one student, we are happy to see that she has found something to write. With another, we encourage more attention to what the teacher has written, and a response to that. As they continue to write, read what the teacher has written specifically for them, and talk with us about their writing, they develop in their writing and reading in a way that we hope is both comfortable and challenging for each student.

**Writing development**

Although we are still collecting data, we have noticed growth in a number of areas, which can be mentioned only briefly here. Without any suggestions on our part, all of the children have moved from drawing to writing. Many have dropped their initial reliance on copying words they could find or asking for help with spelling and are using invented spelling. Much invented spelling now more closely approximates conventional forms. Initially, many students wrote "I like _____ " each day, and simply mentioned something different they liked. They moved next to relating past events, beginning their entry each day with "Yesterday I ___" or "I went _____." Now we see much more variety in topic and style, with more elaboration of topics as well. Those students who initially wrote one proposition a day are now writing 2 or 3. Whereas initially their attention was focused on getting something down on paper, they now spend time reviewing and revising their writing before considering it finished. And finally, they are already developing a sense of audience--answering Ruth's questions, asking her questions, and talking while they write about how she as a reader might respond to what they have written.

Cynthia, from Colombia, illustrates some of these areas of development. At first, she was reluctant to write in the journal at all. After considerable coaxing, she took all of her writing time to draw and label one picture:

# METALINGUISTIC ACTIVITIES IN DIALOGUE JOURNALS: A STUDY OF COMMUNICATIVE EVENTS IN A HIGH SCHOOL WRITING CENTER

*Richard Harrington*
Phoenixville Area High School

My introduction to dialogue journal writing came out of a need to initiate more personalized, interactional writing activities in the context of a high school writing center. I wanted students to learn that writing could function in a more conversational way where oral and literate strategies merge and where discourse is open to a variety of communicative events. This led me to initiate dialogue journals as part of the writing center and study the results, in order to see how oral strategies might appear in the shared writing experience between teacher and student.

In my preliminary case study of one high school student, I was impressed by the variety of language functions that appeared in our shared text. After several entries I also noticed the student's responses changing from a fixed, formal register to a more open discourse. As the student became more aware of the communicative role of the journal, her writing (and mine) became more flexible. Increasingly, aspects of spoken language indicated an increased facility of the student to respond playfully to the different codes and to shift registers as the situational context dictated. As this brief excerpt shows, language not only increased but also predominated in many parts of the discourse. Language was characterized by what Tannen (1982) refers to as a greater imageability, resulting from details that give the reader a sense of the 'richness' of experience, as this example shows.

*New color: matches my eyes (basically). I believe it's called Kelly green; why, I don't know. I've decided, perhaps by using your Venn diagram in my head, to major in PSYCHOLOGY at Temple university, get my masters, my doctoral, work for----------, and then move to England....Isn't nice to have one's future all planned out. I'll probably become a donut hole stuffer or work at Roy Rogers in Phoenixville.*

*Speaking of which, I didn't know they had such nice houses. I saw a green one, like a southern plantation house, with white columns. Would look quite nasty in light beige with ivy growing up the sides and surrounded, well, over-whelmed by flowers. My dad said it's got one of those grand staircases but the owners let the inside go too long so it would take a lot of money to fix up. Oh well, nice dream anyway.*

Gradually, this student became less attentive to form (an obvious by-product of school writing) and became involved with the code of the mesage in a kind of creative coping with conversational situations. Sound patterns such as repetition, parallelism, volume, list intonation, and prosody, became clearly woven into the fabric of our written conversation. The shared context allowed for the free play of language as each participant calibrated language to fit a social and purposeful context. In effect, the student's dialogue journal became a catalyst for the writer's natural voice to emerge through dialogic interaction.

Applying the findings of this study, I have begun an ethnographic observation of the writing center and linguistic analysis of dialogue journals with my students, in order to record and taxonomize the metalinguistic devices which may emerge. These devices are performative functions of language by which writers call attention to their own language. That is, as a result of the conversational context of dialogue journals, students acquire and use self monitoring skills necessary for establishing different linguistic roles in relation to the discourse event

*"The truth is, I believe every word I've written..."* functions as an evaluation of a foregoing comment.

*"I think <u>this</u> will give me an opportunity to get a few things off my mind,"* announces the purpose of the writer's entry to come.

Will the same kind of language activities found in the

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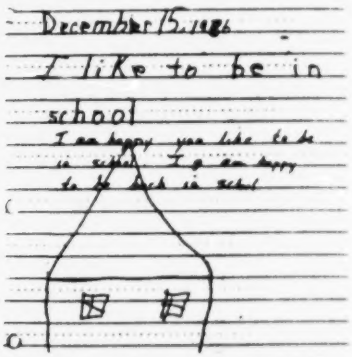
*(<u>Beginning at the Beginning</u> continued from p. 11)*
Her later writing was always done with a great deal of help from whomever she could recruit, the reason for the perfect spelling in this entry:




She has just recently burst forth as an independent writer, writing meaningful messages and priding herself on needing no help.

March 24, 1987

thes mone I look at
a car hit a cat the
litte cat die

That is so sad. Did you
cry when the car hit the
cat? I know I would have
cried— The poor little cat

Several students, unbidden, have started writing books at home and bringing them in to share with the class. They are deeply involved in a reading and writing adventure that began with dialogue journals. They are now moving so fast that at this point we don't know where this journey will end. •

initial case study appear in context of the writing center workshop where as many as ten students are working in the informal school setting? So far, after four months of the year long study, they have but in different ways. As a way of unpacking the wealth of information I have already gathered from dialogue journals, I have borrowed from Hymes and Jakobson's linguistic categories to guide the formulation of a typology of metalinguistic activities. The key is form/meaning covariation, the commutation test: showing that something makes a difference because if it changes, something else changes with it.

I am finding that my students employ a variety of metalinguistic devices which enable them to calibrate their own language to the exigencies of the discourse event. One student, for example, discussed ways she might better communicate her intentions (message) by changing her essay (form) to a poem. Her awareness of a reflective audience provided a context for refocusing her message form from a referential function to a poetic function. Her revision required employing linguistic devices more in keeping with the aesthetic purposes of her message. This and other examples emerging in my study serve to support the claim that once students develop confidence in the shared medium of writing, they will experiment with language.

Bateson (1972) has argued that the social context is like a superordinate message that determines how a given act of communication is to be understood. It is by creating this recognition of social context that the dialogue journal takes on its most important role. When communication becomes shared and meaningful between a writer and a reader, it is more likely the crucial role of language becomes more a part of the modality --tone, manner, spirit--in which a communicative act is done. The dialogue journal provides a physical channel of written communication whereby the participants monitor their own ways of making "contact" with an addressee in a given discourse situation. As a result, it is the context providing the linguistic factors which enables a student to "metacommunicate."

As this research continues, I am finding that assumptions upon which we base the teaching of writing are changing. The dialogue journal represents one very important step in the shifting relationship between teacher and student. It represents an emphasis on writing built upon the immediacy of shared experiences which might best be characterized as speech events. Meaning is fashioned not so much by what a writer knows a priori but by what awareness evolves as a result of the play of sound and symbol and the contour and shape of the message as it is transformed in relation to audience, setting, formality, purpose, and style.

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## COHESION IN THE DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING OF A STUDENT LEARNING ESL

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In my thesis, "A Dialogue Journal as a Means to Encouraging a Bilingual Student to Write Cohesively," I described the benefits of the dialogue journal for an unmotivated fifth grade Mexican-American student, Juan. I compared Juan's dialogue journal writing to his in-class essays, with a focus on cohesion. I found that his in-class writing was very weak in cohesion, whereas in the dialogue writing, Juan developed in his ability to write cohesively.

I believe that Juan's lack of ability to meet school essay standards of cohesion was due to several factors: 1) Juan has had very little motivation to improve his writing skills. Literacy is neither practiced nor valued in his home, and classroom writing assignments do not provide the motivation because they are designed primarily for evaluation rather than for real-life application. 2) Writing skills in Juan's class are taught primarily through grammar and punctuation drills. This may be detrimental since current research says that children do not internalize skills when taken out of context. In addition, since Juan's learning style seems to be relational (field-dependent) he has an even greater need for contextualized learning. 3) Learning to write planned formal essays is difficult for students like Juan, whose primary mode of language use is spontaneous informal dialogue. Since Juan has had very little exposure to literary language, he has even greater difficulty conforming to the essay model than do his do.

Juan's in-class essays were incoherent because they lacked key words and sentences necessary to tie paragraphs together cohesively. For example, he typically began a paragraph with the pronoun 'he' without ever naming who 'he' was, or he would leave out a summarizing topic sentence.

I kept a dialogue journal with Juan for one semester. As he corresponded with me in his dialogue journal, his entries became visibly comparably more cohesive than his essays. Surprisingly, his entries began to resemble well-structured paragraphs even though I had given him no formal requirements for the dialogue journal writing. Most of his dialogue entries began with a full sentence, including the topic and a comment. Sentences following supported the topic sentence.

I attribute these positive changes to the following: 1) The dialogue journal situation encouraged precise language because Juan wrote to an audience physically separated from him, who needed full explanation to understand things she hadn't seen. When Juan was not explicit enough, the audience showed misunderstanding in her response, and Juan learned to fill in the necessary information. On the other hand, in the essay situation the subject of the essay usually was first discussed in class and only the teacher read the essay, so Juan felt no need to repeat information in his essay that she already knew. 2) The dialogue journal involved real communication between writer and interested audience, which motivated Juan to be more careful in conveying his meaning. Juan even began to reread and revise his writing on his own--something he would

## COHERENCE IN DEAF STUDENT'S JOURNAL ENTRIES

*John Albertini*
National Technical Institute for the Deaf

Until recently, descriptions of deaf students' writing have been based on analyses of formal compositions. Typically, they have focused on sentence-level lexical and grammatical anomalies (Bochner, 1982). As more instructors and students use dialogue journals, however, analyses of writing can include informal, interactive texts as well. Below is a summary of preliminary research in which one type of discourse analysis is applied to dialogue journal texts.

This type of analysis focuses on the internal thematic organization of a text by identifying patterns of topic progression. One way of defining organization and cohesion in written text is in terms of the "given-new contract" (Clark & Haviland, 1977). According to this contract, the reader expects that the writer will generally present old or given information before new. In a recent analysis of technical and scientific research reports written by professionals, Weissberg (1984) identified three versions of the given-new schema or three patterns of given-new topic development. The most common, the "linear" version, is where the new information of one sentence is reiterated as the given information in the following sentence. In the following example, the underlined words represent the given information.

> Hydrology is based on the water cycle, more commonly called the hydrologic cycle. This cycle can be visualized as.... (Weisberg, 1984)

The second pattern, "constant topic progression," is where the same topic is reiterated throughout the text; and in the third, the "hypertheme pattern," one facet or part of the whole becomes the topic of each successive sentence. A paragraph describing the parts of a microscope would fit the hypertheme pattern. A common fourth alternative identified by Weissberg is where a writer mixes two or more patterns.

My question was whether these patterns were general enough to apply to informal writing and to learner's English. To answer this, I asked two colleagues who were using dialogue journals for "interesting and coherent journal entries." The selection was random in that neither knew what kind of analysis I had in mind. SF, a nineteen year old college student, mixes two patterns in the following excerpt from a long autobiographical entry.

Journal (SF)

*When I was born, I couldn't walked, talked and moved around. The reason why was that because I was born Celebral Palsy. My whole family were very depressing. They were told I would be retarding and won't be able to move around at all and also should send me to a special hospital and to stay there all my life.*

*One day, my parents took me to many differents kind of doctors to find out if this doctor can be able to help me out. They finally found a right doctor that said, "Oh, I can help your daughter to walk, talk and move around" & "She would not become like a retarding person." My whole family were praying to god that I would be able to walk.*

*Six years later, I started to learn how to walk, talk, and crawl on the floor. My parents have been working so hard on me. They took me to the Physical Theaphy everyday and to the doctor too. We have moved to (X) from (Y). The reason why we moved to (Y) because there was a very good school for me to go. This school is called "Celebral Palsy Center." This school helped me a lot with speech and everything. When I was up to 14 years old, I left from C.P. center to (Z) School for the Deaf. All of a sudden, I went to a public school. I disliked (Z) because it was too easy for me especially I didn't like to sign language. I am oral and always talk all years long. I mean that I always use my speech all the time. I am hard of hearing.*

In her first sentence, the new information is, "I couldn't walked, talked and moved around." The topic of the subsequent sentence, "The reason why...", refers back to her physical limitations, establishing a clear link between the two sentences. Another example of this kind of link, linear topic progression, occurs in the third paragraph: "The reason why we moved to (Y) because there was a very good school for me to go. This school is called..." The new information, "a very good school," is reiterated as given in the subsequent sentence ("This school"). Much more prevalent in SF's entry, however, is a constant topic progression. From the third sentence of the first paragraph to the end of the second paragraph, the topic of each sentence is her family.

DS's journal entry was written as a personal reaction to piece on masks by Rilke.

Journal (DS)

*The faces all over the world by we see only mask. Only people see their faces, are their relationship or close friend. Face is the most important. Face is a isolation. Mask is*

---

*( Cohesion in Dialogue Journal continued from p. 13)*
rarely, if ever, do in his essays. 3) The dialogue journal focused on the sharing of personal interests rather than on mechanics, which greatly improved Juan's attitude toward writing. Evidence of this is the many times he came to our tutoring sessions bubbling with excitement for me to read his written message. Also, his entries increased in length over time.

In actuality, I believe that Juan, as well as many other struggling students, has great potential which has not been tapped by traditional instructional methods. This deficit emphasizes to me the need for teachers to develop writing assignments that are more purposeful, personal, and audience-centered so that students will understand the communicative power of writing, and thereby be motivated to improve their own writing.

*Thesis: A Dialogue Journal as a Means to Encouraging a Bilingual Student to Write Cohesively. MA Thesis, University of Texas at Arlington.*

*Jacqui is going to Indonesia with the Summer Institute of Linguistics, and we don't have her address there. We do, however, have a copy of her thesis.* •

*(continued from p. 14)*
*good safe keeping. It stayed out from people and it protect from the face. Mask is not authentic, it lie to people. Faces are beautiful and natural. Also mask is natural but may not beautiful. Face go through their touch natural world life with the mask from the birth till die.*

Before analyzing this entry, some paraphrasing may be necessary to clarify the writer's intent. Where relationship occurs in the second sentence, relatives was probably intended. With three grammatical additions, the sentence would read: "[The] only people [who] see their faces, are their relationship [relatives] or close friend[s]." Also, the final sentence of the entry might be paraphrased as: "A face goes through experiences in the world and in life with the mask from birth till death."

At first glance the organizational schema seems to be reiteration of a constant topic: first, the faces, then the mask. Note that each and every sentence begins with one or the other. Also note that in the first and last sentences, faces are mentioned in connection with masks. This would imply that faces and masks are different aspects of a single persona. So viewed, the entry falls into the "parts-to-whole" or hypertheme pattern. In addition to brevity and simplicity, adherence to a single organizational scheme makes this text lucid and tight, that is, coherent.

From this preliminary analysis, it seems that topic progression schemas are useful describing cohesion in journal entries. In these journal entries, the writers adhere to one or more organizational schemas. Beyond the surface anomalies in these students' English, use of these schemas highlights the underlying cohesion and order in the writing. Of interest to writing researchers are the conditions which foster such coherence. Control of topic, a hallmark of dialogue journal writing, would seem a crucial element. Of interest to student and teacher is that such coherence emerged when the focus of the writer was on communication of content rather than on form.

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*A longer version of this article will appear in a book to be published by TESOL.*

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## ASSESSING COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN THE DIALOGUE JOURNALS OF ESL STUDENTS

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This study provides a valid methodology for the assessment of communicative competence in dialogue journal writing or any other functional use of written language, using three measures in triangulation. Triangulation is often employed when none of the measures available has been independently validated prior to the study.

The study has its roots in a dilemma that I, along with many other ESL teachers, faced. In the summer of 1981, I had been asked to teach a required grammar course to adult students, but I wasn't convinced that the formal study of grammar in isolation would help them become more fluent speakers and writers. I began keeping dialogue journals with each student, to increase their experience in the functional uses of English in a communicative setting. As the journals progressed, I noticed growth in the students' written communicative competence, and became excited about the positive changes I was seeing. The dialogue journals were showing themselves to be a vehicle for promoting and facilitating the development of communicative competence in writing.

The next step was to demonstrate empirically that these developments were taking place. I was concerned because I believed that the assessment measures already in use did not fully represent students' communicative skills. I discovered that there were no existing measurements that could be used to assess communicative competence in writing. My goal was to find or develop valid measures of communicative competence that could be used with first or second language students.

The dialogue journals from 18 of my adult Japanese ESL students provided the texts for analysis, development and validation of a methodology. The dialogue journal texts are communicative language in use, and are therefore valid as a source of data for the analysis of communicative competence.

The three independent measures used in this work include holistic assessments of communicative competence in dialogue journal writing, student grade point averages from all ESL classes taken during an intensive summer program, and an analysis of discourse topic features. The discourse topic analysis includes five aspects: topic initiation, topic continuation, topic recycling, topic content (domain or theme) and quantity of texts as measured in a sentences per topic ratio. The GPAs are clearly the most external, and not based on the dialogue journals; however, they represent teacher assessments of the students' general language ability in an ESL program, and were therefore included in the analysis.

Based on the results for each of the three measures, students were rated on each measure and stratified into high, middle and low groups of equal size. Correlations between the three kinds of measures could then be determined. The holistic rankings and the GPAs correlated very highly (.86), supporting the hypothesis that the GPAs in some way assess students' communicative ability in addition to their proficiency in the traditional skill areas. The correlation *(cont. p. 16)*

## DIALOGUE JOURNALS AND THE ACQUISITION OF SPELLING IN A BILINGUAL CLASSROOM

*Robert Bahruth*
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It is great to see the growing interest in interactional classrooms and a Gravesian approach to writing (Graves, 1982). Although many of us have seen just how effective dialogue journals have been in triggering an interest in reading and writing, there is still much hesitation and doubt in the minds of many researchers and educators about the new approaches which emphasize functional communication over teacher corrections. There is still a need to prove that developmental forms, such as invented spellings, and grammatical overgeneralizations and undergeneralizations, will indeed work themselves out in the minds of early readers and writers as they are involved in functional language use.

In a bilingual fifth grade classroom the dialogue journal was introduced to children of illiterate migrant farm workers. These children were reading at several grades below fifth grade and were falling further behind each year; most were heading for "drop-out" status. I prefer to place the blame where it really lies by calling it "squeezed-out," as a result of a system of mainstream schooling which failed to attend to the specific needs of these minority children (see Cummins, 1986).

Using dialogue journals, the intervention employed deemphasized writing errors, recognizing them as developmental in nature. The students were told to merely concentrate on geting their ideas written down in their journals, and the teacher responded to their ideas, providing them with a model of conventional language usage. Through their journals the students were reading and writing meaningful text on a daily basis.

Presently, through a dissertation pilot study aimed at analyzing the evolution of their language acquisition, convincing evidence has been found which should help to reaffirm the soundness of communicative approaches. To date some of the more interesting findings are

a)writing skills improved in the journals despite the fact that no emphasis was placed on form;

b) word length seems to have nothing to do with complexity (and therefore difficulty or ease of acquisition) in the mind of the child (an assumption underlying basals and reading formulas);

c) where invented spelling is concerned, two areas of persisting difficulty involved silent graphemes (e.g., know and light), and double vowels (e.g., people and because);

d) children can learn the conventions of spelling through individualized interaction involving different words for each learner, and

e) they seemed to be learning classes of words (e.g., words with and without final e, rather than memorizing them one by one as in lists and spellers, evidence that students are acquiring underlying principles governing English orthography.

At the end of the year these dialogue journal writers (who were also publishing in the classroom) averaged three years gain in reading!

Considering the educational histories of these students, and in light of the information above, it seems appropriate to quote Urzua (1985), "...children will learn those words and surface forms which code the experience they are having."

Cummins, J. (1986). "Empowering Minority Students: A Framework for Intervention." Harvard Educational Review, 56, 1, 18-36.

Graves, D. (1982). Writing: Children and Teachers at Work. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

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*(Assessing Comunicative Competence continued from p. 15)*
between the discourse topic results and the two other measures were also significant. This correlation suggests that the linguistically based discourse topic analysis is also a valid indicator of student communicative ability, in that the composite of discourse topic measures groups the students similarly to the other two measures.

This study offers two major contributions to the field. First, the findings provide a baseline for assessing discourse topic management skills in the dialogue journal writing of these students. Second, the study shows that three types of assessment, used in combination, indeed provide an assessment of students' communicative ability in interactive writing, thereby validating these measures as used in this context. This and future studies can corroborate empirically my own intuitions and observations, and those of many other teachers, that dialogue journal writing facilitates and demonstrates the acquisition of communicative competence.

Gutstein, S. Toward the assessment of communicative competence in writing: An analysis of the dialogue journal writing of Japanese adult ESL students. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Georgetown University, 1987.

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### *Diary Writing*

*Monday*. Got up, washed, went to bed.
*Tuesday*. Got up, washed, went to bed.
*Wednesday*. Got up, washed, went to bed.
*Thursday*. Got up, washed, went to bed.
*Friday*. Got up, washed, went to bed.
*Next Friday*. Got up, washed, went to bed.
*Friday fortnight*. Got up, washed, went to bed.
*Following month*. Got up, washed, went to bed.

Mark Twain recalls this boyhood journal in *The Innocents Abroad*, noting that he opened it one New Year's Day and stopped, discouraged: "Startling events appeared to be too rare in my career to render a diary necessary."

## PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES: PERSONAL AND COGNITIVE GROWTH AND LIBERATION

*The studies in this group are all quite disparate, but share one common thread, of looking at psychological aspects of the dialogues and of student and teacher otucomes - self-awareness, understanding, self-concept and attributions for success and failure. Most are also attempting to bridge the gap between psychological aspects and the text, by grounding their studies in text analysis. We hope that "psychological perspectives on personal and cognitive growth and liberation" captures the diversity and richness of this new group of studies.*

## "UNCOOPERATIVE, COLD-FISH STUDENTS" VS. "DISORGANIZED SOFTIES": RESEARCH ON THE USE OF PERSONALITY TYPES IN DIALOGUE JOURNAL INTERACTIONS

*Henrik Eger*
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I always thought I was a good teacher. However, over the years I began to feel uneasy with my quest for excellence and the way I made my students follow what I considered my enlightened "let's do it all" agenda. Did I really help each individual student to find his or her unique voice, or was I enforcing a demanding work load in the name of progress? Worse, was I cloning young people in my own creative-academic image?

I vividly remember one of my brightest engineering students at UIC who began to show opposition to me from the moment I introduced the dialogue journal. He frequently verbalized his disgust with "all those unnecessary things in English departments." The more caring and understanding my journal responses, the worse his replies. He said that he refused to "expose" any feelings, especially within an academic environment, and suggested that "caring" had nothing to do with "logic" in general or his "education" in particular.

Three events helped focus my uncertainties and concern.
1. I had studied and been trained in counseling approaches, learning to accept radically different ways of feeling, thinking, and expressing oneself, and listening and responding to others in ways acceptable to their needs.
2. I had discovered dialogue journal writing and the powerful extra dimensions it can bring to teaching, writing, and learning.
3. I had been introduced to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI ), a non-clinical personality type inventory[1] and had begun to study the impact of personality types on behavior in general and on writing in particular.[2] Before this, I had felt misunderstood and frustrated by my students; understanding my own personality type in relation to my students changed my outlook completely.

The more I opened my mind to these new concepts the more I realized the potential for myself and my students. I began to ask many questions that eventually led to my dissertation research on "The impact of teacher personality types on student journal writing," and to this article.

During the next few months I hope to learn more about some of these nearly unexplored questions through observations, interviews, and experiments.

1. How much does a certain personality feel attracted to journal correspondence, say an intuitive writer compared to a sensing one, a perceptive teacher compared to a judging one?
2. Are there personality types that would feel particularly (un)comfortable in working with dialogue journals?
3. Does a formal knowledge of personality type influence the actual writing in dialogue correspondence? And especially:
4. If one were to compare student with teacher personality, could one measure and perhaps even predict volume or quality of writing, depending on the "match" or "mismatch" of teacher and student type?

With a knowledge of personality types, I hope that my study can help (college) teachers to enhance the understanding of their writing partners and may come to see reticent students as something other than uncooperative "cold fish." Similarly, young adults who have learned to become aware of aspects of their own personality might have a chance to revise preconceived expectations of themselves and others, thereby freeing-up possibilities of expression and growth through dialogue.

I consider dialogue journal writing one of the most creative and powerful tools in the life of a teacher and a student. However, I am wondering whether dialogue writing without an intuitive or conscious attempt to understand and appreciate personality type differences could be considered a dangerous instrument in the hands of those teachers who, over the course of time, have hardened and come to perceive difficult students as "uncooperative" or "ignorant."

Students, too, unaware of some of the strengths that can come from appreciating type differences, might wreak havoc on unsuspecting instructors by labeling them as "disorganized softies" simply because their teachers say or write things which the students find strange and unacceptable.

Some of the following comments by Myers and McCaulley, although written for MBTI counselors, illustrate the potential benefit for teachers who are interested in the connection between personality type and journal writing. Had I known some of these things when teaching the engineering students, our dialogue journals might have been an even more rewarding experience for everybody involved.

"In early sessions it is not useful to ask a thinking type to describe feelings. It is also not useful for counselors to label thinking types 'defensive' or 'intellectualizing' when they have trouble putting feeling into words, or when their words for feelings sound analytical."

"Sensing types will need to know that the information will have some practical value."

"Intuitive types will need to see possible future benefits."

"Feeling types can sometimes be more concerned with pleasing the examiner than with reporting their own natural styles."

"Introverts can be expected to be particularly concerned with privacy issues."[3]

Obviously, personality typology is more complex than these few practical excerpts indicate. However, while the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator cannot be a panacea,

*(continued from p. 17)*
interpretation and discussion of its results might lead college students and teachers to a much deeper understanding of themselves and of others. This, in turn, might help to generate more powerful writing because of the potential for very personal insights. Research on the impact of type differences on the writing of dialogue journals seems inevitable.

[1]Useful general introduction to the MBTI: Gordon Lawrence, People types and tiger stripes: A practical guide to learning styles, published in 1982 by the Center for Applications of Psychological Type (CAPT), POB 13807, Gainesville, FL 32604.

[2]Jensen and Ditikenson, "Personality and Individual Writing Processes," College Composition and Communication, 35, 285-300 (1984).

[3]Isabel Briggs Myers and Mary H. McCaulley, Manual: A guide to the development and use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Consulting Psychologists Press (577 College Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94306) 1986. Excellent handbook, bibliography.

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## PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL BY HISPANIC, YAQUI AND ANGLO EIGHTH GRADE GIRLS AT RISK

*Pat Colfer*
University of Arizona

My career in education has brought me in contact with many "at risk" kids. As a teacher, I found myself sympathetic to kids who faced personal struggles and suffering relating to home, school and personal lives. "At risk" does not have an exact meaning, and seems to include anyone who is not behaving in a socially acceptable manner, who seems headed toward failure as distinguished from success by common societal standards, and/or who tends toward activities involving personal danger. In keeping with this long-term concern, for my dissertation I decided to investigate how at risk adolescent girls perceive school. What meaning does school have for them?

As participants for my ethnographic study, I chose nine girls: two Hispanic, two Anglo, and five Yaqui Indian, all attending a middle school in the Southwest. Three of them had repeated eighth grade; all of them had failed or received low grades in subjects the previous year. The diversity in this small group is deliberate, to determine if girls from the two minority groups would view school any differently from their Anglo peers.

Dialogue journals became one way to gather information about the girls' perceptions during the 1986-87 school year, since I would not be seeing the girls each day. The conditions for our dialogue are not optimum, to say the least! We are given a drawer in the school office where the journals can be

## GETTING TO KNOW THEM THROUGH DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING

*Tina Redman*
Philadelphia Public Schools

In psychological theory the Gestaltists emphasize the whole pattern of behavior or experience rather than elemental analysis. The fundamental principle then is that the whole of experience or behavior is more than the sum of its parts. If any element changes, then there is a change in the whole person. The Gestalt school emphasized the principle that the development of values is, in part, a result of social (cont. p.19)

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*(Perceptions of School continued)*
left--right under the office phone, used by teachers, administrators, student aides and parents. Although the drawer is marked with my name and "University Materials," there is no assurance of privacy. We began the dialogue anyhow.

At this point, I can offer some observations about the use of dialogue journals in a research project of this sort. As I hoped, the dialogues have provided an ongoing sense of my presence in the school, as well as a continuous record of their experiences and reactions to school and events. The use of the office drew the girls there for a positive reason, a change from the negative requests they are used to experiencing from administrators. Although I am not using the journals as a counseling tool, only as one method to gain information about how the girls viewed school, the journal writing has helped establish a personal connection between each girl and myself. Some wrote more than others, but our dialogues were always personal, and at least indicated to each girl that one adult was interested in her personally.

Already, preliminary analysis of the texts make clear that the girls wrote more about their personal lives than their reactions to school experiences--an indication of the relative importance of school in their world. I also believe that the dialogue journals allows the gathering of data on gender specific issues. Do girls write about the physical changes they experience during early adolescence? Do they write about treatment by teachers that seems discriminatory toward girls, or boys? What changing views of body image and self image can be traced in the dialogue journals of young adolescents?

Two other potential research uses of dialogue journals have surfaced during this study. One is how the dialogues can be used to learn culturally relevant information about school, family customs or culture patterns that impact on a student's school life. Second, can we gain information about the transition from one school to another during early adolescence? What information is revealed about individual adjustment, and the help given by the school, as perceived by the student? Dialogue journal communication can be a powerful instrument revealing information about these issues of gender concerns, cultural experiences, and school transitions. My own research-in-progress hints at their potential for investigation in these areas.

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*(continued from p. 18)*
conditioning.

The teacher who applies this principle is aware that myriad mental, physical, social, and emotional experiences all influence the ways students learn, act, and react in the classroom. Being aware of subtle nuances which produce various behaviors and achievements in the classroom which enables the teacher to better handle and grasp the inner motivations of her pupils.

Dialogue journal writing on a daily basis gave me the unique opportunity to "speak" to my students about their homes, neighborhoods, school, churches, friends, family, etc. Dialogue journals helped me with the gargantuan task of discovering the interests, values, cultural and ethnic aspects, biological and emotional needs, motivational drives, external and internal stimuli, and other considerations which make up the "whole" child.

A year ago I began a project with a below-average eighth grade class in a middle school within a large city school system. Many of my students had been retained, and thus were overage for the grade level. Several had lengthy records of discipline problems. Some were enduring very difficult conditions at home and in the neighborhood. Some needed desperately to "talk" to someone who had a genuine interest.

Since I could not sit down and actually have a personal conversation with each of my pupils every day, the dialogue journal became an extremely visible alternative. It was definitely a way to communicate in a personal and systematic way. If I actually got to know them better, could I then teach them better? Would I be able to handle discipline better? Could I make a real difference in their academic achievement? And most importantly of all could I get them into the habit of expressing their world through writing?

Some of the questions for which I sought answers in our dialogues: What is this child's self-picture? Has she attained self-approval and self-respect? What is her emotional temperament? Which aspects of her emotional repertoire are in operation during this period of her life? Is he concerned about actions or events which cause fear, worry, anger, annoyance, jealousy, or shame? Or is he feeling the emotions of love, happiness, joy, elation, satisfaction, or pleasure? I gained insights to these and other questions, and I began to discover the intricacies of adolescent behavior in relation to both in and out-of-school variables.

I am just at the beginning of analyzing my data. However, I already have some conclusions about what happened to me and my relationship with my students. Interacting within the dialogue journals allowed me to interact privately rather than publicly with certain personalities. Since we were continually "talking" to each other, we were continually adjusting our perceptions of each other and our understandings of each other. A teacher really needs all the help she can get, and benefitting from the interactions which surface during dialogue journal writing is really a "help" and definitely worth the extra effort.

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## THE DIALOGUE JOURNAL IN A HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH CLASS

*Doris Armstrong*

My research is on the use of dialogue journals during one semester in an "average" suburban high school English class. I asked my 11th grade students to keep a journal focused on classroom matters: responses to reading, drafts of writing assignments, interpersonal relations--anything having to do with the class, in both senses: people, and course of study.

As teacher/researcher, I did not structure the journals on a day-to-day basis. That is, although I allowed classroom time for writing, I did not give suggestions each day as to what to write about, other than to reiterate that "classroom concerns" should be the focus. I replied to the journal entries about once a week. There were no grades given for the journals.

I felt that much schoolwork is structured so as to inhibit students from the discovery, definition, and solving of problems, and with little actual engagement with the subject. Could this journal provide a field where, without fear of errors, a student's thoughts could play freely? Would the dialogue journal help resolve interpersonal problems?

I am now in the midst of the slow process of analyzing these journals, to see what is really there. A very wide variation in the amount of writing occurred. In a few dramatic instances personal difficulties between student and teacher were worked out in the journal, which may have blocked the student's work if left unresolved. And certainly some instances of growth in thinking about theme and character in literature occurred.

An example of personal difficulties dealt with in the dialogue journal follows. The annual attack of spring fever was causing considerable restlessness when one student, Pat, described her irritation with two boys in the class.

PAT: *The kids in this class (most) are a joke. I have put up with enough of Tom's or Bill's crude and dicusting comments. No one stands up to them, I'm personally sick of them, I'm not letting them walk over me, they can walk over you, but they will never walk over me as long as I'm here.*

ARMSTRONG (in margin): *I guess that's how it looks. Good for you.*

PAT: *I totally cannot concentrate w/ them constantly talking about things they do, (mostly w/ girls). I could even express myself in English and apply myself if I wasn't being held back by these two people. They are constantly holding our class back from many things & I'm sick of IT!*

ARMSTRONG: *You do very well anyhow-! Thanks for the feedback--I'll try harder to hold them down."*

The result, of course, was that as I succeeded in enforcing more order on these two, Pat was pleased and so was I. I might not have worked on this problem as effectively if Pat had not added her motivation to mine.

In contrast, another student, "Jack", used the dialogue journal for thinking about subject matter. He *(cont. p. 20)*

## A STUDY OF STUDENT AND TEACHER LIBERATION THROUGH DIALOGUE JOURNALS

*Hannah Winston*
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Dialogue journals are allowing me to conduct two studies--how I as a teacher create and implement a "liberating pedagogy" for adolescents who are a-literate, and how these students, so unaccustomed to experiencing reading and writing as communication, develop their reasoning processes and voice through my teaching. The outcomes for both teacher and student are grounded in the concept of education as liberation--rather than oppression.

A "liberating pedagogy" flies in the face of the common practice, as John Goodlad documents it in A Study of Schooling, of exposing students in low tracks to "far less challenging material and less effective instructional practices because they are viewed as impoverished individuals lacking in intellect and unable to respond to challenges." Support from the Philadelphia Alliance for Teaching Humanities in the Schools (PATHS) and the University of Pennsylvania's Literacy Research Center has enabled me to develop and begin studying the effects of an interdisciplinary (reading, writing, speaking and literature) learning community in which low-performing secondary school students are encouraged to put language to use in meaningful and practical ways.

In practice, the learning community is a reading/writing workshop, which this year is investigating adolescent change in the students' own stories and in the works of Maya Angelo, Alice Walker, J.D. Salinger, Zora Neale Hurston, Claude Lewis, Ann Frank, Elie Wiesel, Margaret Mead, etc. Our in-class reading, writing and talking are tied together through the twice-a-week dialogues between each student and myself in dialogue journals.

The just-beginning study of my own development seeks to document and understand how I become a "liberatory educator" as suggested by Paulo Freire. The study of the students' work, including their dialogue journal entries, will focus on their discovery that they have a language and a voice in the struggle against inequality and will try to show how dialogue with a competent other (me) enables them to become more competent communicators within the zone of proximal development as described by Vygotsky.

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*(Dialogue Journals continued from p. 19)*
applied the Aristotelian concept of the tragic hero to the play All My Sons.

JACK: *I think Joe Keller fits ~~the~~ Aristotles Poetics definition of the change of fortune and character. His downfall is the ~~cause~~ result of a great error, letting the cylinders go cracked. He is a virtuous man who worked against adversity to prosperity. He is ~~known~~ highly renowned and prosperous.*

ARMSTRONG : *Well, yes--maybe not a King or Prince, though. Not even president of General Motors! What 'weakness' in his personality caused him to make this wrong decision?*

I would be happy to hear from other researchers who are analyzing dialogue journals, and exchange problems and possible solutions with them.

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## COLLEGE STUDENTS WRITTEN REFLECTIONS ON LEARNING

*Deborah Jensen*
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My research describes college student's reflections on their academic experiences presented in dialogue journals maintained during one semester, using the text of 10 journals.

Research in the area of reflection suggests new understandings and appreciations are reached when an experience is recaptured, thought about and evaluated. One way to enhance the learning experience is to strengthen the link between the experience and reflection by creating a specific activity following the experience. I have chosen to use dialogue journals to create this reflective moment. The replay of events and feelings can create an association, a connecting of the ideas and feelings which are part of the original experience and those which have occurred during reflection with existing knowledge and attitudes. The linking of new conceptions to existing cognitive structures and feeling is one of the central features of the learning process.

My assumptions are that the dialogue with the teacher may help to develop an awareness and a reflective approach to learning. The students can gain a sense of actively directing their own learning by isolating, developing, and refining issues, concern, and questions related to their study. Writing gives distance from the experience, which may have the effect of clarifying it and fostering the ability to work with it and learn from it. It helps students to take a look at the affective role of the learning process, to appreciate the role of their own feelings, and to clarify the feelings involved.

Specific research questions guiding the data analysis are:

- How does student self-concept reveal itself in, and influence student reflection in the dialogue journal?
- What type of academic experiences in the Communication skills class do students reflect on in their dialogue journals?
- What attributional strategies do students use in reflecting on academic experiences, in relation to achievements or failures in this class, and in relation to their overall studies?
- What types of teacher feedback in the dialogues influence student reflection on academic experiences and self-concept?

A constructivist approach will be used to carry out this study in order to interpret, explain and understand the patterns found in the dialogue journals.

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## RELATED RESEARCH: THE EFFECTS OF WRITING ON HEALTH

James Pennebaker, a psychologist at Southern Methodist University, has been conducting a fascinating series of studies on the effects of writing about distressing life experiences on the body's immune function and general psychological health. In a 1987 APA presentation he has shared with us, he and his colleagues Kiecolt-Glaser and Glaser examined the efficacy of writing about traumatic experiences by having fifty healthy undergraduates randomly assigned to write either about personal traumatic events, or trivial topics for 20 minutes on each of five consecutive days, in a personal (non-dialogue) journal.

A number of measures of healthy functioning, including blood samples to measure immune system function, health center visits, and self-reports of subjective distress were taken before, immediately afterward, and at six weeks after the study. Autonomic activity (blood pressure, heart rate, etc.) was also measured each day during the study.

Pennebaker reports that writing down concerns and feelings led to positive results on the immune function tests, health center use, autonomic levels (which dropped day by day for the writing group), and subjective distress. Those who were asked to discuss only trivial pursuits got no benefits, and this difference held up after six weeks--the writers had made fewer doctor visits.

In a related study, Pennebaker and Beall found that writing about both emotions and facts surrounding a traumatic event was even more beneficial than an "emotions only" approach. Pennebaker cautions that the writers instructed to write about traumatic events were initially more distressed than those assigned to the trivial condition, but that long-term followup measures all favored the writing as a therapy approach.

He also points out that a major drawback of "writing therapy" is that this kind of private, non-interactive writing "does not allow for an objective outside opinion, support from others, or objective coping information." While this is true for the personal journal or diary, dialogue journals, when used appropriately, can also provide some of the benefits of feedback and counsel. Those of us who find that we are doing counseling in dialogue journals even when that wasn't the initial intent are probably doing more good than we realize.

We are interested in hearing about other research which pursues directly the therapeutic and psychosomatic benefits of written communication, and will share any such finds in future issues.


Pennebaker, J.W., Kiecolt-Glaser, J., & Glaser, R. Disclosure of traumas and immune functiaon: Health implication for psychotherapy. Paper presented at the 1987 Meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C.

Pennebaker, J.W., & Beall, S.K. (1986). Confronting a traumatic event: Toward an understanding of inhibition and disease. Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 95, 3, pp. 274-281.


## Leslee's Page

### A TEACHER'S VIEW

*Leslee Reed*

Because my teaching position for many years was close to several colleges and universities, our school and its teachers were asked to assist in research programs almost constantly. The usual format was to meet with the Researcher, listen in silence to the plan and then of course, change or adjust our time schedules and groupings so that the mechanics of the testing or instruction could be matched to the requirements of the research plan. Participation consisted of following through on the classroom tasks, which were never related to my own instructional approach. The instrument or materials were usually made available to us afterward. Most often within two weeks a letter of appreciation would arrive. End of the project.

Fortunately for me, not all research worked just that way. In the many, many research studies with which I was involved, a few were very different, and they are the only ones that were really valid as far as my work was concerned. Not only was the research in each case undertaken in order to find out something about my own instruction, with a lot of explanation by me and to me, but my students were involved with the researchers over an extended period of time because their goals were to enhance the students' educational welfare as well as gather data.

Jana Staton was the type of researcher who came not knowing the answers and really not even sure of the questions. Her focus was on finding out what I was already doing in my classroom, not in asking me to carry out her new tasks. Through countless meetings, discussions and shared readings her project developed, but not in an iron-clad formula. This process of watching, studying, evaluating, discussing, revamping and starting over again and again allowed me to be a real part of the study as it developed. Our discussions were frequent and though we could only assess the "here and now" of what was happening, new ideas and new insights developed. The students were enriched by a caring classroom participant whom they grew to love and to trust. As a teacher, I was stimulated to see that what was going on was valuable and worthy of study.

This project grew and reached its goals, but instead of ending, it grew further and continued to involve me, showing me my own work from a totally different perspective so that I became a better person, and a better teacher. After Jana's work with me, Joy Kreeft Peyton became interested in the use of dialogue journals with my ESL students, and we continued the process I started with Jana.

A third research project with which I became involved has really never ended, either! This project was aimed at developing sustained silent reading for all students. The researcher, Gail Povey, and I agreed on the importance of sustained silent reading, and so the problem was how to inspire and stimulate the non-achieving student and the absolute "non-readers" in my class, to want to read. Again, the researcher became a regular visitor to the room, becoming acquainted with each student and getting to know the tastes of each member of the class. How very enriching that alone was! Her visits were anticipated and her various techniques for

*(continued from p. 21)*

"selling" a student on reading a book grew and grew. Just as I did with Jana, Gail and I had long talks, worked on plans for stimulating reading, discussed ideas that worked, discarded difficult ones planned anew and so it went. The frequent dialogue with both researchers was stimulating on a level that most teachers do not have. Our open and frank evaluation of the ways we perceived the study to be going was so enriching and so energizing for me.

In participating in these two studies, not only was I able to grow, but I was validated as a teacher and sustained in my belief that there is always more to learn. As a teacher, the frustration of not being able to reach students who have potential or who have never developed a yen for learning is constant. To have had two researchers who not only listened to my ideas, but built on them so that I and others could benefit has been a highlight of my teaching career.

---

## Recent Dialogue Journal Publications

### Dissertations

Gutstein, Shelley. 1987. Toward the assessment of communicative competence in writing: An analysis of the dialogue journal writing of Japanese adult ESL students. Georgetown University.

### Articles

Braig, D. J. 1986. Six authors in search of an audience, In B. Schieffelin (Ed.) The acquisition of literacy: Ethnographic Perspectives. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing, 110-131.

Farley, Jack W. 1986. An analysis of written dialogue of educable mentally retarded writers. Education and Training of the Mentally Retarded. Vol. 21, No. 3, pp. 181-191.

Farley, Jack L. & Susan L. Farley. 1987. Interactive writing and gifted children: Communication through literacy. Journal for the Education of the Gifted. Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 99-106.

Peyton, Joy Kreeft. 1986. Interactive writing: making writing meaningful for language minority students. NABE News, Vol. 10, No. 1. pp. 19, 21.

Rueda, R., Flores, B., & Porter, B. 1986. Examining asssumptions and instructional practices related to the acquisition of literacy with bilingual special education students. In A.C. Willig & H.F. Greenberg (Eds.), Bilingualism and Learning Disabilities: Policy and practice for teachers and administrators. New York: American Library Publishing.

A BONUS: For DIALOGUE subscribers only, we will send our most recent list of publications and abstracts of the NIE grants and all completed dissertations on request, FREE!, if you will send a self-addressed, stamped envelope with postage to: DIALOGUE, CAL, 1118 22nd St., N.W., Washington, DC 20037. A complete list of publications on dialogue journals and research abstracts is included in the Special Issue #2 available from Handbook Press (see back page).

## A SURVEY OF DIALOGUE JOURNAL USE IN THE ARLINGTON COUNTY ESOL/HILT PROGRAM

*Joy Kreeft Peyton*
Center for Applied Linguistics

Because dialogue journal use, and therefore research, is focused at the classroom level, we know relatively little about the extent and nature of its use at the school system level. As part of an extensive research project now in progress concerning dialogue journals use and effects (a project of the Center for Language Education and Research, funded by OERI), we collaborated with staff in the ESL program (called ESOL/HILT) in Arlington, Virginia to conduct a survey of teachers in their program in the spring of 1986. The survey responses provide an interesting picture of actual daily classroom use among ESL teachers.

Of those teachers who completed the survey, 19 (8 elementary, grades 3-6 and 11 secondary, grades 7-12) said they were using dialogue journals at the time, and all 19 said they intend to continue using them in future years. This represents about 20% of the teachers in the ESOL/HILT program, which encompasses both elementary and secondary levels. In response to questions concerning how long teachers have used them, the number of students involved and the frequency of use, responses show that: Most teachers have been using them since they first heard about them, with 60% using them for 2-3 years; elementary teachers keep dialogue journals with much smaller numbers of students (around 10 on the average), and most elementary teachers, who often work with small groups of students on a pull-out basis, do not keep dialogue journals with all of their students; about half keep them with fewer than half.

### When do your students write in their dialogue journals?

Most secondary students write at the beginning of class, for about 10-15 minutes. Elementary HILT teachers have a little more flexibility because of longer class times, and some have their students write at any time during the day, again, for around 10-20 minutes.

### How often do your students write? How often do you respond?

Most elementary students write 2-3 times a week, and in all cases the teacher responds each time the students write. In secondary classes the students write more often (every day in most classes), but because of the large number of students, most teachers usually respond only once a week. Two secondary teachers do respond each time the students write.

### What are your purposes for using dialogue journals?

Elementary teachers' main purposes are to communicate with their students, to get to know them personally and understand them, to encourage free expression, to eliminate the stress and fear of writing, with language-related purposes of modeling language structures for students and stimulating growth in writing ability tending to be secondary. All

teachers, elementary and secondary, express the desire to dispel fear of writing and to make writing more natural, communicative, and fun. Secondary teachers' main purposes tend to be to encourage free writing for thought development and to develop writing skills. Personal communication and getting to know students are secondary, although still very important, concerns for many teachers at the secondary level. Nearly all teachers (90%) believe they are accomplishing their purposes.

**What benefits do you as a teacher receive from using dialogue journals?**

Both groups of teachers cite the closeness with their students that develops and the knowledge of students (about life styles, problems, skills, and social needs) that is gained, which would not come from class writing assignments. The opportunity to monitor students' writing development is seen as a secondary benefit, but an important one to the secondary teachers.

**What benefits do you think the students receive from using dialogue journals?**

For elementary students, teachers mentioned these: students realize they can communicate in writing and see it as fun as well as work; they realize that someone in school cares about them; they gain confidence in their writing; they develop their ability to express thoughts and ideas fluently; and they develop thinking skills. Secondary teachers expressed the belief that one of their major purposes for dialogue journal writing, that students' thinking and writing skills improve, is in fact manifested in the students' writing. Secondary teachers also identified the personal relationship that develops and the students' increased willingness to communicate in writing as benefits.

**What problems have you encountered in using dialogue journals?**

Half of the teachers said they have encountered no problems. The major problem for others, especially secondary teachers, is the amount of time and work it takes. Most teachers are able to address this problem by reducing the number of students with whom they write or the number of times per week they and the students write. Teachers now using dialogue journals appear to have worked out a system that is comfortable for them.

**Have you noticed any changes in the quality of your students' dialogue journal writing during one year? If so, what kinds of changes have you noticed?**

Nearly all of the teachers (90%) believe they have seen changes in the quality of their students' dialogue journal writing. Both elementary and secondary teachers see growth in quantity of writing and freedom and creativity of expression, as well as level of interest of the writing. Two teachers write, "I see tremendous growth in their writing and ability to express themselves, moving from stilted sentences to free flowing expression. The children know they can share with me." "With most children the length of their entries increases. They eventually write about more interesting issues than when they first began. Many children notice their spelling errors after I model them, and structures are occasionally picked up from those that I use." Some also see improvement in English structure--sentence construction and complexity, grammar, spelling, and vocabulary.

**Have you noticed any changes in the quality of your students' other writing during the year?**

Many teachers (81%) also noticed changes in their students' other in-class writing, and half believe these changes can be attributed to the dialogue journal writing. Changes include better writing on the paragraph test and on written answers to content area questions (e.g., social studies textbook questions); generally freer, more interesting, and more expressive writing; better organization of thoughts and clear expression of ideas; and improved grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

**Conclusions**

From the results of this survey, a number of conclusions can be drawn about the practice of dialogue journal writing in the ESOL/HILT program in Arlington. First, it is a well-established practice. It is suggested in the curriculum guide as a valuable approach, and at least 20% of the teachers in the program were using them at the time the survey was completed. There are possibly more who did not complete the survey. Teachers started using dialogue journals when they first heard about them, most have continued using them for a couple of years since then, and all those using them at the time of this survey intend to continue using them. Reasons for not continuing the practice in most cases relate to uncontrollable circumstances, such as inappropriate class type and time limits, rather than a belief that the practice is not effective.

Second, it is a practice that teachers have picked up quite easily (after one or two workshops) and have been able to adapt to meet their own situations, goals, and needs. Dialogue journals are being used at a variety of different grade levels, in a variety of different types of classes, and for a variety of purposes. Teachers have worked out ways to use them which are manageable for them and effective in maintaining the dialogue. Some mentioned the amount of time it takes to respond as a possible disadvantage, but most teachers who responded have worked out a system in which they do have time and they are not overwhelmed. Teachers who were interviewed said that it is time well worth spending. As one teacher who has been using dialogue journals for three years put it, "If I didn't think it was worth the time we spend on it, I wouldn't do it."

Finally, dialogue journals serve a much broader purpose than simply the development of reading and writing abilities. Most teachers indicated that they believe their students' writing did in fact improve during the year (they were not asked about reading), and attribute this improvement at least in part to the use of dialogue journals. At the same time, however, teachers believe that the primary benefit of dialogue journals, to them and to their students, is the opportunity they have to communicate on a one-to-one basis with their students--something that would be impossible without the journals. While they concentrate on communicating, writing abilities develop as a secondary benefit. •

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DIALOGUE is the newsletter about the uses, benefits, and theory of dialogue journals, a practice of communicating in writing about topics of mutual interest through continuous, functional conversations between (usually) learners and teachers. This newsletter provides an informal means of sharing information, ideas and concerns among those who are using dialogue journals and studying their uses in the United States and in other countries. It is an outgrowth of two National Institute of Education research grants to study dialogue journal writing with native and non-native English speakers. The newsletter is now produced with partial support from the Center for Language Education and Research (CLEAR), which is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the Department of Education. For information about dialogue journal research and practical applications or the work of CLEAR, write: Dialogue, CLEAR, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd St., N.W., Washington, DC 20037.

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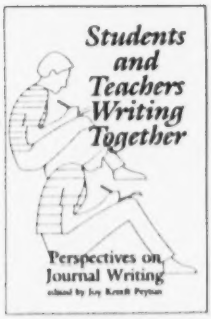


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Joy Kreeft Peyton, editor

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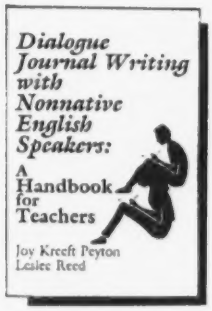


## Dialogue Journal Writing with Nonnative English Speakers: A Handbook for Teachers

Joy Kreeft Peyton and Leslee Reed

This handbook is the first comprehensive volume to offer practical advice in an easy-to-use format free of jargon. Even if you have no experience with this activity, Peyton and Reed will get you started. Between them, they have 30 years of firsthand experience with dialogue journal writing. Experienced practitioners will find new ideas to revitalize their teaching.

The authors explain how to effectively start dialogue journal writing with students, maintain the dialogue once begun, and deal with typical problems that may arise.

The book is recommended for teachers of nonnative English-speaking students in mainstream, bilingual, or ESL programs, from kindergarten through high school. It also has direct application to native English-speaking, gifted and talented, learning disabled, and special education students.

ISBN 939791-37-4, 1990, 124 pp.

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# 7. Background Information for the Workshop Presenter

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# A History of Dialogue Journal Writing[1]

Jana Staton and Joy Kreeft Peyton

This brief history of the use of dialogue journals—as distinguished from their monologue cousin, the personal journal—describes how the idea for dialogue journals began and focuses on the relationship among the various research projects that have been largely responsible for disseminating the idea. It has often been said that nothing is as powerful as an idea whose time has come. Dialogue journals represent not a theoretically generated idea, but a teacher-developed classroom practice that came to the attention of other teachers, researchers, and teacher educators at a time when the broader ideas of interactional participation in learning and the power of natural conversational discourse were becoming widespread. Dialogue journals have spread quickly by word of mouth because they are an instance of concepts that have not yet found practical expression in educational practice.

Dialogue journal writing began as a classroom practice rather than as a research idea or theory-derived technique. We do not know exactly when or where some teacher first made personal written dialogues a consistent means of communication with students. Certainly some teachers have written informal responses to their students' entries in personal journals or to other written work, and a continuing conversation has ensued. Teachers in many parts of the country, after hearing about the research on dialogue journals, have told us that they have already been engaging in this kind of written exchange with their students. The practice of interactive written conversations may go back as far as the beginning of writing itself. There is a long history of note passing among family members, fellow workers, and students, but the beginning of a more permanent, cumulative notebook for such exchanges is unrecorded. However extensive the prehistory of dialogue journals, the recorded history of the research on dialogue journals in classroom settings is rather brief, beginning sometime in 1979.

## Beginnings: The Classroom Practice

Dialogue journal writing as the focus of research and eventual dissemination began with one teacher in Los Angeles, Leslee Reed, who had been engaging in written dialogue with her sixth grade students since 1964. Her particular practice began when a principal asked teachers to make sure their students left school each day remembering something they had learned or done (so they would not announce at the dinner table that they had learned nothing). Leslee Reed decided that asking students each afternoon to write down something they had learned would be the best way to reinforce their memory. As she collected these slips of paper, she grew fascinated with the different responses to the same class lessons and began writing back when a student's comment seemed to need an answer.

As the daily collection of slips of paper soon became unmanageable, bound composition books became a practical way to keep track of these daily written exchanges. As the journals grew into yearlong conversations, Reed found that the private discussions allowed students to ask questions, to complain, to request help in solving personal as well as academic problems, and to share feelings. In fact, the journals soon became the core of her instruction.

Because Reed found that the privacy of these conversations was the key to their success, she kept their existence rather quiet, letting parents and the principal know only that a personal journal was part of her instructional program but not advertising the fact that she spent an hour a night responding to her students. Reed, like many excellent teachers committed to the art and science of teaching and to her students, saw nothing too remarkable in her practice of carrying on 26 private written conversations each day. Without some rather chance crossing of paths (see below), her use of dialogue journals would have escaped the notice

of others, and perhaps many more years would have passed before any effort or study focused on this practice.

## Start of the Dialogue Journal Research Project

In 1979, Jana Staton, then studying counseling psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles, was searching for instances of writing being used in school as a kind of informal or "preventive" intervention to help adolescents solve personal and academic problems. Staton heard about Reed's journals from a friend whose children had been in her class. Getting in touch with Reed turned out to be easy, as she and Staton belonged to the same church in West Los Angeles. During the spring of 1979, Reed and Staton discussed Reed's use of journals as a means of personal communication with each student. The obvious differences between traditional monologue journals (which students are asked to keep and turn in periodically as a form of process writing and "self-reflection") and these ongoing conversations quickly became apparent, and the name "dialogue journal" suggested itself as a way to distinguish them from their more common and well-known cousins.

Staton decided that the dialogue journal practice would become the focus of her dissertation and gained the cooperation of Reed and the school's principal, Winifred Fischer, to visit the classroom, to meet with parents to secure initial consent, and then to spend time getting to know each student. In 1979–80 Staton collected the first full-year corpus of dialogue journals from 26 sixth graders in a Los Angeles public school that served a middle-class neighborhood. In the period now thought of as the early days, Staton was sustained in her work largely by an intuition that these written dialogues were a new and unknown world, best reflected in the lines of a Santayana poem:

O World, thou choosest not the better part;
It is not wisdom to be only wise,
And on the inner vision close the eyes,
But it is wisdom to believe the heart.
Columbus found a world and had no chart,
Save that which faith deciphered in the skies.
'Twas all his science and his only art.
(Holzberger, 1979, p. 92)

Because of the complexity of this natural language discourse and its lack of resemblance to anything in the research literature on writing or composition, Staton asked Roger Shuy, a sociolinguist at Georgetown University, for help in developing methods for analysis. Discourse analysis and conversational analysis methods were becoming more widely known in the field of linguistics in 1979, and Shuy had just completed a major study of children's oral functional language at the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington, DC. Shuy was able to suggest a wealth of ideas and provide guidance to the growing new fields of discourse and conversational analysis. Bud Mehan at University of California, San Diego, and Pat Greenfield of UCLA also contributed initially in formulating ways to do research on interactive written texts.

In the middle of the year of data collection, Staton submitted a proposal to the National Institute of Education (NIE) to study in detail the 26 dialogue journal texts and describe the nature of the journals as a writing event. At that time, the Writing Team at NIE, headed by Dr. Marcia (Whiteman) Farr, was encouraging more ethnographically and qualitatively oriented studies, and NIE funded the study, to be conducted at the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL).

With the funding of this first study, "Analysis of Dialogue Journal Writing as a Communicative Event," in July 1980, Staton moved to Washington to conduct the analysis, forming a team with Roger Shuy and, very shortly, Joy Kreeft, who had just come to Georgetown University to study sociolinguistics. Thus the original study was stretched (with a lot of volunteered time) into a three-person effort in Washington, with a fourth member, Reed, in Los Angeles carefully reading everything that was written and continually deepening our understanding of the dialogue journal practice. The final report (now available as Staton, Shuy, Peyton, & Reed, 1988), which was completed in February 1982 and disseminated by CAL, demonstrates the rich and varied language and thought that evolve as two people interact on mutually interesting and important events and topics over an extended period of time.

## Dialogue Journals With Nonnative English Speakers

In the fall of 1980, Reed was unexpectedly transferred to a new school in the middle of Los Angeles with students who had migrated to the United States from all over the world. This unplanned event provided a wonderful opportunity to observe dialogue journal use with nonnative English speakers. The students in her sixth grade class came from 14 different countries and 9 different language backgrounds, and some of them knew little or no English when the year began. Any thought that the dialogue journals would be less successful with students not yet proficient in English was quickly dispelled as Reed began to report on the value of the dialogue in helping her students acquire a second language and become comfortable with the academic work of American schools. With Reed's encouragement, arrangements were made to ask student and parent consent to copy a second year of journals and to videotape the class.

That opportunity to study dialogue journal use with a group of nonnative English speakers led to a second dissertation and the second NIE grant growing out of Reed's classroom. Kreeft began her dissertation research in 1982, visiting Mrs. Reed's classroom to observe the dialogue journal practice and interview Reed and her students. Kreeft received her first NIE grant in 1983 through the CAL to support the analysis of dialogues written by nonnative speakers. Staton, Shuy, and Kreeft collaborated on this study, and Robby Morroy, another sociolinguistics student at Georgetown University, joined the research team. The NIE report, *Dialogue Writing: Analysis of Student-Teacher Interactive Writing in the Learning of English as a Second Language*, completed in 1984, explores in depth the many aspects of the journal interaction that support and promote second language acquisition. The report (now available as Peyton & Staton, 1992) is greatly enhanced by a practitioner-oriented chapter written by Reed.

Through a grant from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, Department of Education, to the Center for Language Education and Research, Kreeft (now Peyton) continued the study of dialogue journal writing with nonnative English speakers, working this time with teachers in Arlington County, Virginia, in grades one through high school. This work has resulted in this workshop packet and a teacher's handbook, both published by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), and several published research and educational articles. Through close collaborative work with Ruth Sedei, a first grade teacher in Arlington, we were able to follow the emerging literacy of beginning writers in dialogue journals (Peyton, 1990).

## Dialogue Journal Project at Gallaudet University

In 1982, as the first dialogue journal study was being completed, Dr. William Stokoe invited Staton to begin working with him as a consultant at Gallaudet University (the federally supported 4-year university in Washington, DC, for deaf and hard of hearing students). An initial project, funded by the Gallaudet Research Institute, encouraged college faculty to adapt dialogue journals for use in communicating with deaf students at the college level and began documenting the effects on both deaf students and their teachers of sustained written interaction in a conversational format. The Gallaudet campus also includes model elementary and secondary schools, and soon teachers at all levels—from kindergarten through graduate school—were involved in using dialogue journals.

The research focus of the Gallaudet project was to document the practical benefits of dialogue journals from the teacher's perspective and identify strategies for achieving optimal effectiveness within actual classroom settings. Teachers at the precollege and college level, especially Cindy Bailes, Jean Slobodzian, and Margaret Walworth, became involved in the analysis of their students' texts, conducted workshops around the country for other teachers of deaf students, and published papers growing out of research on the project. Two primary-grade teachers, Susan Searls and Jean Slobodzian, pioneered the use of dialogue journals with young deaf students and, along with Bailes and Staton, produced a handbook for elementary and secondary teachers on the use of dialogue journals, focusing particularly on their use and ben-

efits with deaf students (Bailes, Searls, Slobodzian, & Staton, 1986). A handbook on college-level uses, with articles from Gallaudet University faculty, has also been published (Staton, 1990).

## Spreading the Word

Research on dialogue journals began with no formal plan to disseminate information about the dialogue journal practice to other teachers. Dialogue journals were seen as a unique expression of one teacher's concepts and style of teaching, and it seemed unlikely that many other teachers would pick up the idea without training and perhaps some kind of incentive. Thus the major presentations and papers from the first project were intended primarily for researchers. However, because dialogue journals represented a concrete instance of such concepts as interactional scaffolding, mutual knowledge construction, and natural language acquisition, a number of researchers with both the theoretical framework and a commitment to practice began disseminating the idea as soon as they heard about it. Courtney Cazden, Dixie Goswami, Bambi Schieffelin, Jessie Roderick, Angela Jaggar, Dorothy Strickland, Vic Rentel, Yetta and Ken Goodman, Shirley Brice Heath, Fred Erickson, Susan Florio, Chris Clark, Fran Davis, Sarah Hudleson, Carole Urzua, Carolyn Kessler, Katherine Samway, and others heard about the dialogue journals and either began using them in college courses or encouraged classroom teachers they worked with to use them.

The early research reports and word of mouth led an increasing number of teachers to start using dialogue journals effectively, well before any written descriptions were available. Apparently a sizable number of teachers from kindergarten through college share Reed's basic educational precepts, and, upon hearing a brief description of dialogue journals, understand exactly how to fit the practice into their teaching.

Even during this research phase, two very active practitioner-oriented dissemination efforts began. In 1981 Reed was asked to join the UCLA Writing Project as a consultant and has given workshops for teachers throughout the greater Los Angeles area ever since. On the East Coast from 1981 to 1984, several Georgetown University PhD candidates, including Shelley Gutstein and Joy Kreeft Peyton, began using dialogue journals with English as a second language (ESL) students in classes they were teaching. Gutstein and Kreeft collaborated with other ESL teachers—Christine Meloni (George Washington University), Carol Harmatz (Georgetown University), and Henry Batterman (Lewis and Clark College)—to present a number of workshops in 1982, 1983 and 1984, including presentations at the TESOL annual meetings and Washington, DC, Area TESOL meetings. These workshops and presentations, based on these teachers' own use as well as the data beginning to emerge from the study of nonnative speakers, focused on the practitioner. A network of ESL and foreign language teachers using dialogue journals around the country began to form.

Although we worked primarily with elementary through high school teachers and students, adult educators in ESL and adult basic education programs began to adapt our work to their own situations and to use our materials in teacher and tutor workshops. They expressed the desire for materials written specifically about and for adult learners. When the National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education was established at CAL in 1990, we were able to respond to that request. We contacted all of the practitioners we knew using dialogue journals with adults learning English to collaborate in a volume describing their practice (Peyton & Staton, 1991).

Our description of the spread of dialogue journal use from teacher to teacher and from researcher-educator to teacher points out that most people who try dialogue journals not only find them invaluable, but become dissemination centers for everyone around them.

*Dialogue*, a newsletter about dialogue journal use and research, was first published in April 1982 as an informal means of getting in touch with the growing body of people who had attended workshops or research presentations or who had written for the NIE report. As both the information base and our readership grew, the newsletter developed from a free mimeographed document into an 8- to 12-page newsletter with a paid subscription list. The newsletter discussed specific issues and topics illuminated

by dialogue journals and provided a channel for interaction with many people involved or interested in dialogue journal use in a wide variety of settings—researchers, classroom teachers, teacher trainers, and educators of the deaf throughout the United States, Canada, and overseas. The newsletter was published through 1989, and a bound volume of all issues is available from the CAL (see p. 6–4).

## Dissertations and Other Research Reports

While working under the NIE grant, Staton continued to develop her concepts for a dissertation in the field of counseling practice, which emerged in 1984 as "Acquiring Practical Reasoning through Teacher-Student Interaction in Dialogue Journals" (Staton, 1984). It extended her research within the framework of informal, preventive counseling in the classroom, analyzing the teacher's intuitive use of interactional scaffolding in thinking through social problems with students in early adolescence.

Kreeft's (1984) dissertation at Georgetown University, also developed in tandem with her NIE research, focused on the emerging grammatical competence of beginning English as a second language (ESL) learners, describing the patterns of their use of English morphology in this written medium and the change over 10 months' time in their use of certain morphemes. Morroy's (1985) dissertation, also at Georgetown, examined more closely Reed's strategies in responding to and establishing an understanding with students learning ESL.

As more doctoral candidates began adapting dialogue journals to their own teaching situations, dissertations on the use of interactive written conversations with other students appeared. These are the dissertations we know of at the time of this writing; more are under way. Andrews (1989) and Rose (1989) studied the role of written interaction in the learning of math concepts; Bode (1988), the effect of dialogue journal writing with parents and teachers on first grade students' beginning literacy development; Braig (1984) and Nair (1991), young children's developing literacy in their dialogue journal texts; Dolly (1987), like Morroy, the role of various teacher strategies in maintaining dialogue journal conversations, but with adults; Farley (1985), the dialogue journal texts of mildly retarded vocational rehabilitation students; Gutstein (1987), topic development in the dialogue journal writing of Japanese university students learning English; Harrington (1988), high school students' use of metalanguage in both oral conferences and dialogue journal writing; Markman (1983), the effects of dialogue journal use on attitudes and writing skills in upper division composition classes; and Talburt (1991), the writing of Soviet refugee women in an adult literacy program in the United States.

Other major research reports have also pushed our knowledge and thinking beyond the practices of Reed, one teacher with two groups of students. Rueda (1986) studied dialogue journal writing on computers with handicapped students; Jones (1988) and Gross (1990) carefully described the benefits and limits of dialogue journals in adult ESL instruction; and Maguire (1988) has studied the functional aspects and cohesive quality of native and nonnative English-speaking first graders in Canada.

## The Future

Our work is far from complete. We invented neither the practice of dialogue journals nor the theory and concepts underlying them, and we have tried to emphasize in this account the growing number of people who have participated in some way in the work on dialogue journals. As teachers and researchers around the world recognize the power of extended written dialogues for students in many different learning situations and seek to integrate the use of dialogue journals into their programs, they, along with us, continue to seek to understand how the basic concept of functional, contextualized written interaction can fit into and even influence other kinds of communication in the classroom (oral, signed, written) and how teachers can effectively use the dialogue journal text to conduct research on their students' needs and progress and their own educational practices. We feel that the inner vision that guided our early work has indeed led us into a complex and exciting new world, and we are eager to continue in this collaborative exploration with other teachers and researchers.

## Note

1. An earlier version of this article appeared in Staton, Shuy, Peyton, and Reed (1988, pp. ix–xii).

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# Summary of Dialogue Journal Research Findings (see Transparency 29)

Dialogue journals:

- Provide individualized opportunities for students to engage in intelligent discourse, adapted to their linguistic, cognitive, and emotional levels (Staton, 1984; Peyton & Seyoum, 1989).
- Facilitate acquisition of higher-order language functions and structures of reason, for both native English speakers and students learning English as a second language (Shuy, 1988, 1992; Staton, 1988).
- Provide movement from context-dependent to context-independent self-expression in writing, paralleling oral language development (Peyton, 1988, 1990; Staton, 1985).
- Give substantial opportunities for reading development by providing texts at an individualized and continuously more demanding level. This is especially helpful for students with low reading levels (Staton, 1986).
- Provide multiple opportunities for the kind of complex language use that is valued in more formal writing and higher order cognition tasks in schools (Peyton, 1988; Peyton, Staton, Richardson, & Wolfram, 1990).
- Have demonstrated their capacity to motivate both students and teachers to engage in meaningful, thoughtful written interactions, overcoming the reluctance of many students from limited-literacy environments to write, and the "burnout" of many teachers struggling to teach such children (Hayes & Bahruth, 1985; Staton, Shuy, Peyton, & Reed, 1988).

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# Dialogue Journal Writing with Nonnative English Speakers

## An Instructional Packet for Teachers and Workshop Leaders

Joy Kreeft Peyton and Jana Staton

Do you or does someone you know want to give a workshop or presentation about dialogue journals? This packet will be invaluable to you. It pulls together in an easy-to-use format more than 10 years of work on dialogue journals—research results, basic guidelines, helpful hints, the experiences of *many* teachers and students, and samples of their work. It can be used alone or in conjunction with *Dialogue Journal Writing with Nonnative English Speakers: A Handbook for Teachers*, also available from TESOL.

The packet includes

- An abstract to use for proposing the workshop to principals, department heads, or at conferences.
- A set of simple guidelines for giving a dialogue journal workshop, telling you what to say, when to say it, and what transparencies to show. Suggestions for group activities are included.
- Masters for making more than 30 overhead transparencies of major points made and of students' and teachers' writing, keyed to accompany the guidelines.
- Sample student dialogue journal entries from early elementary, upper elementary, and secondary students to which workshop participants can respond.
- Handouts for workshop participants:
  - An overview of dialogue journal use in a question-answer format.
  - A brief guide for getting started with dialogue journals.
  - Two sample issues of *Dialogue*, the newsletter about dialogue journals, with ordering information.
- Background information for the presenter:
  - A history of dialogue journal writing.
  - A summary of dialogue journal research findings.
  - A bibliography of publications about dialogue journals.

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